monogram

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why Hollywood

EDITORIAL

"... and Macdonald hated meaninglessness
even more than the war in Vietnam."

Norman Mailer, Armies of the Night

In the family circle of the arts, the cinema is treated as the enfant sauvage: attractive, but without a doubt mentally subnormal. Nothing reflects this more clearly than film-journalism. Cinema City, colour supplements, weekend reviews, tv-lineups - so many ways of ignoring the cinema by systematically overexposing the trivial periphery, and leaving the centre, the actual films, in total darkness. Whatever its intentions, the glamourizing of King Kong's hair-piece, of the first cinemascope lens, or Ruby Keeler's shoes, not only transforms, for example, Hollywood into a museum of moth-eaten bric-a-brac with a phoney camp appeal, it also panders to a vague feeling that the cinema in general is of no great consequence.

For that reason even today, after Ford has become a household name, and Losey a respected Englishman, after Bergman has entered conversation as a suitable piece of small-talk, and Godard has provoked the nearest thing to an intellectual debate on the cinema in this country, films are still a "terrain vague", an uncharted no-man's land in the cultural landscape. They are produced and consumed in a jealously maintained intellectual vacuum, and what there is of a more serious discussion has all the uptight irritability of criticism vegetating in a ghetto.

Among those who call themselves educated, in particular, the cinema fares much worse than, say, the theatre - perhaps because showing more overtly and inescapably than either literature or the visual arts to what extent it is also an industry, it raises certain awkward aesthetic problems: for example, it constantly exposes the flaws in the elitist conception of artistic creation; and being dominated by frankly economic considerations, it is deprived of the social and intellectual status which "art" commands as a matter of course. Instead, it lives in the cultural thicket that passes for entertainment, and in which only the ever-hungry eye of the sociologist is permitted to roam. Yet precisely because its ideological function is less disguised, the cinema serves as an important reminder of the ideological element in all artistic production. This ambiguous pluralism, the essential impurity of the cinema in the realm of the expressive arts, is a permanent challenge to a critic's powers of discrimination, an irritant to his sense of values. Moreover, it forces him to declare his aesthetic criteria, and to explain his cultural or political presuppositions.

With all too few exceptions, British film-criticism, however, has preferred to ignore such implications. Given the present situation of a rising interest in the actual production of films, it has, for example, failed to mediate between the expectations and assumptions of the cinema-going public and the intentions and talents of that creative minority which in the past and today has made the cinema worthy of such interest. As a result, no other critical idiom is at once so confused and inconsistent, so eclectic and yet embroiled in misunderstandings, as the language of the cinema.

It was from a sense of apprehension, a feeling that the cinema, both creatively and critically, may continue to remain ignorant of itself, that we began, something over twenty issues ago, to write about films in the Brighton Film Review. That others elsewhere felt like us, was apparent not only from the comparative success of our initially modest venture, but also from the emergence of several other independent publications at about the same time, some of comparable, some of divergent aims. We freely admitted our personal preferences - the Hollywood cinema of the 40s, 50s and early 60s - and acknowledged our debt to French film-criticism in this respect, and to the pioneering work which Movie had done in England.

*

The greatest difficulty which stands in the way of a widely disseminated and active cinematic culture, still remains the chronic inaccessibility of the films themselves, whether old or new. Timidity of the distributors and the precarious economic position of independent cinemas is one reason, but the indifference of certain national institutions, set up to provide the basis for such a culture, but often less than adequate to the task, is also to blame. The critical activity in the last two years, the renewed interest in the cinema as a social and artistic phenomenon has undoubtedly made an impact on the distribution habits, on television programming and on National Film Theatre policy. But this pressure has to be maintained, and possibly intensified - as well as diversified.

MONOGRAM's basic aim is therefore to extend the work done in the Brighton Film Review, to investigate the main cinematic tradition as we see it, and to define at least one possible approach to the cinema as a whole, by a careful attention to the actual films being made today, whether commerical or independent, and to re-assess outstanding and interesting works of the past. But we shall also be dealing with neglected areas or under-estimated figures of cinema history, and while we are committed to *spelling out our critical principles and to formulating a coherent "policy"*, we are not a theoretical magazine, nor are we persuaded that a particular political commitment will necessarily dispose of, or resolve, certain fundamental aesthetic problems: this means, among other things, that concerning evaluation and meaning, we will take a film on its own terms and respect its particular frame of reference. Nonetheless, this attention to practice as against theory will continue to involve us to a certain extent with the commercial American cinema, partly because of its quantitative predominance, and partly because of its stylistic, thematic and ideological consistency which has given it an extraordinarily high level of individual and collective achievement, an achievement peculiarly linked to the often appalling conditions of economic exploitation and creative unfreedom.

By defending Hollywood movies as in many ways exemplary, we are not claiming that they are inherently a superior form of film-making, nor that the Hollywood aesthetic is the only possible one. What we are insisting on is that the cinema, in spite of its comparative youth and novelty does have a tradition, and that this tradition is to a large part constituted by the American cinema. And like every art, however public and commercial, the cinema derives its complexity and richness not only from its relation to felt and experienced "life" - a difficult quantity to assess at best - but also from the internal relation to the development and history of the medium.

This second relation is MONOGRAM's chief concern, for we believe that the cinema of the future can hardly be the major form of artistic and social expression (a position which it us undoubtedly capable of) without being to some extent comprehensible within this tradition, which is not even primarily one of how films are being made, but a simple fact of cinematic consumption, of what kind of films we have been brought up on. This may sound reactionary, but isn't: to ignore the American cinema is aesthetically as harmful and potentially damaging as consciously repressing childhood experiences because one cannot come to terms with them: both acts are likely to lead to psychoses and obsessive private fantasies. A healthy attitude, on the other hand, doesn't mean one has to re-enact these experiences ad infinitum.

"Legibility" within the tradition therefore includes for us the critical attitude to the American cinema of a Godard, as well as the more or less subtle links which directors like Truffaut, Chabrol and even Bunuel maintain with the great American directors. Those it doesn't include are the faux-naifs - both underground and above ground, who pretend, for reasons best known to themselves, that the cinema hadn't even been invented before they came along. Such an attitude, once described as the "desperate myth of an iconic adamism", is essentially a rearguard action, and although there are aesthetic as well as political and social reasons for the emergence of cinematic primitivism, and a strategic value of some importance in the implicit protest of all artistic minimalism, this shouldn't blind one to the necessary distinction between what is creative expression of a dilemma, and what is merely its symptom.

Of course, it would be foolish were we to pretend that there is only one way of making movies, or indeed, only one way of seeing them. More and more people are learning to handle a ciné-camera - as a profession, an artistic vocation, an instrument in political propaganda or as a means of self-expression. There is, of course, nothing reprehensible about this, and such developments testify if anything to a willingness for experimentation and personal initiative which confirms the cinema's direct and perennial fascination - an indispensable condition for its continuity. But in spite of a virtually universal appeal and increasing technical simplicity, the cinema in the sense that we understand it, as a primarily narrative medium, is a very demanding form of communication, which exonerates neither maker nor critic from holding certain artistic standards. Only if films are brought into an intellectual contact with other films as well as with other aspects of culture can such standards be made meaningful, and if necessary, revised.

Thus, MONOGRAM does not intend to specialize exclusively on the classical cinema. There simply will be a tendency to look at contemporary cinema with aesthetic premises which have been elaborated in the context of the American cinema. If this is a limitation, we accept it as such, and we hope that our restriction in scope will allow us to make up for it in depth and clarity of argument. If there is any single point which unites the contributors to MONOGRAM, it is their belief in the cinema, its relevance and excellence, both past and present. Such a faith is nourished not by a sense of professional obligation, of a job to be done, nor because we are somehow addicted to spending large portions of our waking life in artificially darkened rooms;

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the american cinema

I. a critical statement

▲ Henry Fonda in Fritz Lang's YOU ONLY LIVE ONCE

As film-critics, we ought to be committed, at the very least, to two distinct propositions: that cinema is a serious and important form of artistic expression and that any argument for its significance must take full cognizance of the practise of the American cinema. In other words that, for the critic, Hollywood is the great fact to be reckoned with, but not solely in terms of sheer output but in terms of the cinematic creativity which it wittingly or unwittingly fostered. That, within this context, there was produced a large body of work deserving of recognition, serious attention and analysis, which, for the most part, it has still to receive. Further, that, if anything, it is the American cinema that sets the standards against which the European art cinema is to be judged and not vice versa.

In practise there is no pressing need to justify these opinions. For most people in England and in France who read film magazines take the importance of cinema in general and of the American cinema in particular for granted. And on the whole the case that we wish to make can be most successfully argued through the analysis of specific films or through discussions of particular directors - as we have already done in the *Brighton Film Review* and as we intend to continue to do in the future. Nevertheless, the founding of a new magazine does provide both the opportunity and the incentive to make explicit certain inclinations and assumptions, to improvise a makeshift framework - to be modified, extended or discarded - for a continuing debate.

As for the cultural inferiority of the movies this emerges as a consideration to be taken account of only because patronising the movies continues to be the approved elite cultural stance in both England and America - curiously it is even more prevalent there than here. What is odd is that this attitude requires so little justification: an opinionizing backed only by the flourishing of approved cultural credentials. Robert Warshow and Pauline Kael are representative. Warshow wrote:

> "There is great need, I think, for a criticism of "popular culture" which can acknowledge its pervasive and disturbing power without ceasing to be aware of the superior claims of higher arts, and yet without a bad conscience."

But Pauline Kael frankly confessed to cinematic original sin:

> "Who at some point hasn't set out dutifully for that fine foreign film and then ducked into the nearest piece of American trash? For we're not only educated people of taste but common people with common feelings. And our common feelings aren't all **bad**."

To begin with, we note the built-in assumptions. How could "the higher arts" fail to have "superior claims"? And who could question the alliteration which establishes the equivalence of foreignness and fineness? The antithesis here is no accident but an all-embracing aesthetic distinction. For Warshow and Kael are clearly puritans and they are perfectly clear that literature appeals to their better nature, the movies to their baser instincts. And after reading them, it is tempting to conclude that the "disassociation of sensibility" is not so much a crisis of the 17th century as a characteristic of contemporary bourgeois life, in which the need to pay lip service to an ideal of high culture conflicts with a desire to slum it with the masses. Needless to say, opinions, prejudices that are merely affirmed require no refutation - it is only necessary to show them for what they are.

Nevertheless, the achievement of the American cinema is something that calls for explanation in view of the enormous obstacles, handicaps and pressures that confronted the artist at every turn. If there was access to unrivalled facilities and generous finance, the price which had to be paid for them was often exorbitantly high: the necessity of working with unsuitable scripts and stars, while subject to constant interference from above, the liability of being taken off a project or of having one's work mutilated in the cutting room. It was difficult for the director to retain his self-respect let alone his artistic integrity. The only possibility was to do good by stealth. For the artist in Hollywood, to characterise, in general, the desperation of his predicament, the words of Dencombe in Henry James' story *The Middle Years* are unusually apposite:

> "We work in the dark - we do what we can - we give what we have. Our doubt is our passion and our passion is our task. The rest is the madness of art."

For art, in Hollywood, was a madness indeed.

The Star System ☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆

The star system is normally associated with all that is most shallow and meretricious in the American cinema and if we talk less about stars than was once the case this is regarded as a distinct intellectual advance. And yet stars are one of the great strengths of the American cinema. For the use of the star always implies openness and potentiality, while even the best character acting implies the closing off of possibilities, the straitjacket of a fixed role. In the theatre, traditions of character acting have constantly impeded the development of the drama - Shaw pointed out that it was almost impossible to give adequate performances of Ibsen because the actors interpreted their parts as if they were performing in conventional well-made plays. The European cinema has laboured under similar handicaps and it is relevant that it has only achieved authentic forms of expression through the use of amateurs (Bresson, Rossellini) or by relying on certain actors who have been able to participate in the creation of an appropriate style (Bergman, Godard, Antonioni). Yet this latter group has certainly learnt the lessons of the American cinema.

Georg Lukacs characterised capitalist society as

> "a society so contradictory that it on the one hand gave birth to the ideal of the complete human personality and on the other hand destroyed it in practise"

American society most acutely embodies this contradiction. It is the star who exemplifies this ideal of the complete human personality, even when he or she is placed in the most unpropitious circumstances. For example, in Frank Borzage's *DESIRE* Gary Cooper is a car salesman but he is not **only** a car salesman, he is Gary Cooper. As such he is the equal of anyone. Again Lukacs can be invoked - for he has shown how, in the novel the **typical** hero was replaced by one who was merely **average**. Gary Cooper is typical in this higher sense: he represents universal human potentiality rather than simply mediocrity. In the films of Walsh the star, the hero represents an ideal of completeness, and he is deliberately contrasted with a bourgeois antitype who exemplifies the negation of these values. The rapport which the star establishes with an audience precludes easy moral judgement, forces the spectator to enter into conflicts and tensions. The character is only notionally given - he defines himself through his behaviour and his actions. We witness him choosing what he is to be.

Values - Ideology ☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆

The American cinema can be regarded as having its own distinctive value system and as having thematic preoccupations which are not confined to a particular genre or auteur. The stress on the individual as individual (a function of the star system) is further particularised into the delineation of a hero who is essentially free, floating and uncommitted. Like Cooper's Leatherstocking he operates on the margins and borders of civilisation. The respect he wins from others is based in large measure on his resourcefulness, competence and technical expertise. He is self-reliant and his involvement in collective projects is invariably shown as disinterested and seldom based on self-interest or the desire for gain (Tom Doniphon in *THE MAN WHO SHOT LIBERTY VALANCE*). Yet at the same time, such involvement has the character of pure self-expression. It is not strictly ethical, even when it appears to be so. For there is a strong vein of anarchic individualism running through the American Cinema. The hero is greedy for experience and what he builds is for himself alone - for his own satisfaction. His objective is to dominate, to master, to impose his will upon a recalcitrant reality. He is not concerned with values and rewards of social existence (Mann's aborted *CIMARRON*) and if he cannot find justice within a social context he looks for it outside it (Mann, Lang). All the major genres focus on a conflict between the individual and an objective world. In the Western the hero's desire to impose a pattern is legitimised because it coincides with the needs of society, in the crime picture it becomes taboo because it conflicts with them. In comedy and the musical the struggle is more agonising - the failure of a recalcitrant world to accept the hero's own image of himself is both painful and funny. Similarly the American war picture tends to focus more on conflicts between the individual and military authority, among G.I.s themselves than on the struggle against the enemy. Here the aggressiveness and violence of anarchic individuals can be harnessed to a good cause - in this sense the war film can be regarded as a synthesis of the crime picture and the Western.

These considerations suggest that it may be more fruitful to think of the American cinema as a totality and to study mutations and transformationg within that rather than to work solely within the concept to genre - to work across genres by relating, say, *HIGH SIERRA to COLORADO TERRITORY*, not only on the basis that both are the work of Walsh, but by also considering how Walsh's concern with the heroic individual is related to that of Hawks and by asking how far this can be regarded as characteristic of the cinema of the forties. Equally relevant would be an examination of the treatment of vengeance in the American cinema relating the work of Mann and Lang to that of other directors. Without this wider perspective attempts to define 'auteur' genre will be simultaneously too vague and too narrow.

Mise en Scène ☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆

From the producer's point of view the director in Hollywood was little more than an assembler of readymades - stars, scenery, plot, costumes. Yet this narrowness, this apparent lack of scope constituted a great challenge. Minnelli's reaction is characteristic:

> "I am always ready to take on a subject that might seem alien to me, to look for things below the surface."

The richness of the American cinema stems from this differentiation and integration of levels. Frequently the very incongruity of the materials with which the director is presented can be a source of complexity enabling him to establish tensions and discordances that are both gripping and

disturbing. Uncertainty in the cinema is a great weapon, even though it can be easily vulgarised and abused. But the cinema already suggests that the conception of the completely homogenous and unified artwork will have to fall - and not only in the cinema but in other arts as well. For the European art cinema is one-dimensional (in its very homogeneity) and reality either annihilates interpretation (Italian neo-realism) or the reality is itself annihilated by the weight of interpretation brought to bear on it. The depth and detail of American mise en scene puts most European films to shame. Yet it is characteristic that Minnelli, referring to his use of mirrors in *MADAME BOVARY*, should have to state "it is a recurring image that nobody noticed." The "sophistication" of cinema criticism was for too long such that it only noticed symbols when they were ostentatiously pointed out as such, that it could only recognise as art things which were labelled as such.

In this sense, a commitment to the essentially heterogeneous and diversified character of the American cinema has its own radical implications. It may well prove to be a commitment to a wholly new kind of aesthetics.

David MORSE

Jerry Lewis : are the '70 s his last chance to become a great Hollywood director ?

the american cinema

2. why Hollywood

In a recent Canadian underground movie, the director at the end makes a kind of appeal. He calls on his fellow-filmmakers and presumably his audience, to - I quote from memory - "destroy the cinematic form, so that falling snow is once again falling snow and nothing else."

This seems to me an interesting proposition in several respects. Above all, as I understand it, it is a rallying cry against the commercial cinema, and in particular the American cinema, whose use of falling snow, especially when studio-produced, is simply judged to be part of a debased, sentimentalizing rhetoric. For once, the case against Hollywood - however cryptic - is made not in terms of the economic terrorism imposed by studio-contracts and package deals, *nor the censured and prohibited subjects, nor creative* unfreedom and monopolized distribution methods but instead phrased as an objection based on genuinely aesthetic principles. In protesting against a certain "pathetic fallacy", the appeal tries to challenge the way in which physical reality figures in the traditional American movie. And thus by implication, it contests an entire approach to the representative and mimetic potential of the cinematic image, as it has been practiced, with on the whole increasing but not unlimited sophistication, during the last 50 years of film-history.

That a critical analysis of filmic language can be a meaningful artistic exercise is not in question. Godard was not the first director to make films which are also commentaries on their own genesis and which offer their own critique. But the destruction of certain formal conventions does not make the cinema automatically - or even in the long run - an instrument in future social struggles.

Perhaps what the Canadian film-maker wanted to say was simply: destroy Hollwood because its movies have a form whose ideological content I do not like. Let's create a form whose ideological content I do like. And this ideological content implies that falling snow looks like falling snow. Although I personally am not looking forward to this

type of cinema, I recognize one of its theoretical premisses, namely that a particular form may contain assumptions which are neither purely aesthetic nor morally neutral. The problems raised by the anti-Hollywood lobby are therefore not without interest. But the critics who yesterday argued in the name of a cultural élitism, and the ideologues of today on the extreme left have one thing in common: neither group has ever been unduly concerned with trying to understand Hollywood as an aesthetic phenomenon in its own right. This would seem to be, however, a precondition of judging its aesthetic merit as well as its social function. As I see it, every form of cinema poses two problems of a general nature. Firstly, what one might call the 'reality-status' of the images which a film - **any** film, projects; and secondly, the relation that exists between a given artistic *form and the kind of truth* it implicitly or explicitly articulates. That both these aspects are particularly relevant to a discussion of Hollywood - on the one hand despised for being a dream-factory, i.e. for being unreal in artistic terms, and on the other attacked for its mystification on ideological grounds - must appear obvious.

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When in the following, I speak of the American cinema, or the classic tradition, I intend to refer above all to the films of the 40s, 50s and early to mid-60s. This may be an arbitrary restriction, and although imposed partly by my own personal preferences, I nonetheless feel it to be a particularly representative period. It comprises Hollywood at a time when the major technical innovations - sound, colour, cinemascope - had for the most part already become assimilated as integral parts of the expressive capacities of the cinema. For the period under consideration, the filmic language evolved by Griffith, Stroheim and Murnau still retained its validity as the syntactical basis, whatever its modifications in terms of sound-effects, montage and camera-movements (such as dolly, crane and deep-focus). This tradition embraces on the one hand the best work of the second-line directors, Wellman, Siegel, Dwan, Tourneur, Oswald, Wyler, Daves, etc., and among the great directors, includes the work of Ford, Vidor, Walsh, Cukor, Minnelli, Preminger, Sirk, Losey, Ray, Mann, Boetticher and others.

The list, however, is not infinite. There comes a level in the American production, where no aesthetic seriousness or artistic purpose is discernible, though even below that level, there is still a huge number of films not devoid of interest. At the other - top end - of the scale, I consider that Sternberg, Welles, Hitchcock, Lang, and to a lesser degree, Hawks, have produced films, which for a variety of reasons, fall outside the mainstream as I see it. This does not mean that *PSYCHO, FURY* or *RED RIVER* are incomprehensible within the framework of the traditional American cinema - far from it - but what makes these films exceptional, lies more in the directors' personalities, their vision of the cinema, than in the technical and expressive means which they share with others. One might say that the great directors within the tradition, have created and formulated the standards for their fields and genres - for example, Ford Mann and Boetticher dominating the Western in the 50s; Minnelli and Donen giving shape to the musical; Walsh specializing in the adventure film and making some of the best gangster movies; Leo McCarey, then Tashlin and above all Cukor defining the potential of the comedy; Preminger, Cukor, Sirk and Minnelli together exploring most successfully the melodrama in colour and scope.

The other group, except for Hawks and Lang, have created their own genres, and with them, their own standards. But they all have in common a far more explicitly intellectual, analytic approach to the medium, in which the tradition is reflected only obliquely, or reformulated altogether. This, however, does not mean that their films are categorically better than those produced by the mainstream, nor that all their films are good. It means that in order to do justice to their work, one has to shift one's critical perspective, as one has to, in each case, for

Lauren Bacall Rock Hudson Robert Stack in Douglas Sirk's WRITTEN ON THE WIND

Bunuel, Godard, Bergman or Antonioni. On the whole, therefore, my generalizations deal with only a tiny minority of the overall production of Hollywood. Perhaps as little as one per cent of its total output deserves serious critical discussion, but this leaves anything between 200 and 300 great films, which is more than one could claim about the production of all other countries taken together, and is a singular achievement in any art.

The most fundamental problem which the critic of the American cinema encounters is that he has to find criteria by which a) to describe a certain, on the whole remarkably homogeneous practice of the cinema, to describe the way American films **work**, and b) to find criteria which can evaluate, that is, distinguish among a vast and amorphous body of films, those that reach the level of an artistic statement. As a result, there have been a limited number of essentially related problems, which serious film-criticism in the last ten years has tried to define in relation to Hollywood. Briefly, there is a) the question of authorship, of who in the last resort is responsible for the aesthetic qualities of a film; b) the question of genre, that is, in what sense and to what extent are American films dependent on the established conventions and the iconography of certain genres - the western, the gangster movie, the musical, the war-film, the comedy, the melodrama, etc.; c) what kind of visual language, if any, does the American cinema represent, that is, how does it use cinematic images in a formalized discourse. And lastly, in what social and cultural context does the American cinema operate - does it reflect social reality or mystify it, and does it present a purely emotional appeal to its audience?

Obviously, it is impossible to go into all these questions in detail, or even to summarize the debate as it now stands. What I would like to do, is to reformulate some of these questions in terms of minimal conditions which seem to me to apply to the vast majority of Hollywood films, and which would allow one to determine more clearly a movie's aesthetic merit. I am aware that this may sound suspiciously like an attempt to define a normative aesthetic, where everything that does not fit the proposed categories is rejected. I can only hope that by dealing with a particular period, and a body of already existing film, I am not unduly speculative about the future of the cinema in general or trying to construct an ideal film. However, my view is that a "good" film is a form of visual communication that possesses coherence, and a purpose, which can be discovered, described and assessed. In other words, if a film is meaningful, it can be shown to be so. But as Roland Barthes pointed out: the purport of a work of art is to put sense in the world, not a sense. The question is, therefore how do we discover what kinds of sense there are implied in an American movie. Basically, I am trying to find out what elements contribute towards aesthetic unity in a Hollywood picture of the period under discussion; what use does it make of reality; what types of aesthetic pleasure or satisfaction does it offer; what ideology does it reflect, and how does it validate this ideology artistically?

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The American cinema is organized along fairly precisely calculated lines, which are on the one hand, economic, and on the other, social and cultural. I am here only concerned with the latter, though both are evidently interrelated. Two things characterize this American cinema most distinctly: Firstly, it is an exclusively **narrative** cinema, that is, its prima facie concern is with telling a story, to analyse in fictional terms certain human situations and experiences. Its structural constants are dramatic conflict and narrative progression. Without these, no Hollywood movie would ever leave the cutting-room.

Secondly, it is a **psychological** cinema. This notion is difficult to explain (one might also say, borrowing Brecht's terminology, it is Aristotelian and not epic), but what it means in its simplest form is that a film can, and should, for 90-odd minutes, hold an audience's undivided and sympathetic attention. Louis B. Mayer allegedly judged films by whether his bottom started to ache before the lights went on again or not. In his habitually crude way, the chief of MGM thereby indicated that a good movie, one that he was putting his money on, should activate certain psychological processes - of identification, of emotive participation or imaginative projection, and that these processes constitute part of the aesthetic meaning of a film, and fall within the control of those who make it. I know that these are elementary points, but they are easily forgotten. To what extent this psychological-narrative structure characterizes the American cinema idealogically as a bourgeois cinema, I shall leave to others, better qualified than myself, to discuss.

One of the consequences which I draw from the fact that the traditional Hollywood movie is narrative and psychological is that it excludes certain other categories of film-making, and thus renders largely irrelevant such aesthetic criteria as have been formulated for the documentary, the didactic tract, whether scientific or political, the home movie, whether shown to friends or in a cinema, cine-verite and experimental cinema. It also distinguishes itself from the cinema of ideas, whether of the type produced by Pasolini, or that which Godard is now trying to practice.

Once one has defined what kind of cinema it isn't, perhaps one can agree about the critical terminology which might be most appropriate to the object under consideration. For example, I personally believe that neither the philosophical-phenomenological vocabulary used by Bazin nor the concepts of structural anthropology or of linguistics and information theory can be applied directly. If one has to choose a certain terminology, I would say that given the dual characteristics of narrative and psychological, literature and music seem to me the most comparable fields. I think one can be more specific and say that what corresponds perhaps closest to the aesthetic experience and artistic form of the great Hollywood movie in the 50s and 60s - all proportions guarded - is fiction, as exemplified by the C19th novels, whether romantic, realist or naturalistic. Regarding the depiction of character, the relation of people to their environment, the dramatic devices and plot-construction, the American cinema owes a great deal to the work of Scott, Balzac, Dickens, Tolstoy and even Zola. In other respects, however, notably its overall structure, its semantic pattern, its duration in time, its emotive effect and dramatic line, its elements of audience participation, the movie approaches rather more romantic and post-romantic music, say, that of Berlioz, Bruckner or Wagner. This analogy is obviously not intended as a value judgement, implying that *MR. DEEDS GOES TO TOWN* equals *Les Illusions Perdues,* or that a Preminger movie is worth a Bruckner symphony. I merely want to draw attention to some aesthetic features of the American cinema which hitherto have been neglected in the general debate.

The most relevant implication of the parallel with music is the shift from overt content of a film, to an appreciation where the subject can be seen as only one element in a more formalized kind of discourse. That we are dealing with a formalized discourse has been recognized by almost all cinema-criticism. For example, when we speak of the "conventions" of a genre, we are alluding to a film's stylization and codification of dramatic elements and visual details. It seems to me, however, that this phenomenon extends beyond, and indeed across the genres, as a general characteristic of the American cinema. Perhaps partly owing to its nature as an industry, Hollywood has always aimed at a certain optimum degree of conformity in the methods and means of production. Writing a script seems often a question of assembling in different, but recognizable combinations a given number of common or near-identical elements - of subject, situation or character. But this affects mainly the structure, not necessarily the significance of the finished film. More importantly, stylization implies that given images or sequences, rather than playing any explicitly denotative or even connotative role in the dramatic progression, can nonetheless have a more or less precise "melodic" function, in giving the narrative its inner rhythm and organic vibrations. (It will depend on the spectator's own sensibility whether he can distinguish between the rhythm in a Minnelli and the heavy-handed rhetorical padding of a David Lean).

The analogy with fiction, on the other hand, is meant to draw attention to the function of a middle-of-the-road character as a mediating consciousness, to the relation between fictional structure and realism, and lastly, to the connexions between the dramatization of a certain world and the analysis of a given society.

Both analogies, however, ought to prevent too literal or unreflective an interpretation of a Hollywood movie in terms of its story-line, and induce the critic to seek individuality, aesthetic qualities and moral significance (if such it has to have), not primarily in the intellectually analyzable material content, but elsewhere as well - in such things as the dramatic pattern, as it emerges from the successive conflicts between characters, the creation and manipulation of visual space, the rhythm of the action, its climaxes in relation to its temps morts (an extreme, and therefore perhaps not altogether successful example is the dramatic rhythm of Peckinpah's *THE WILD BUNCH*, which presents a succession of anti-climaxes suspended between two highly over-charged, formalized dramatic climaxes), the purpose of a director's audience-manipulation (Hitchcock's notorious remark that he played on the spectators' emotions in *PSYCHO* like a pianist plays his keyboard). Other significant elements are of course the camera-movements - Lang's tracking-out from a close-up to relate a detail or a character to his environment, the way Nicholas Ray signalizes an inner conflict of a character by unbalancing the architectural composition of the frame, Preminger's pans, Fuller's track-in - track-out sequences, Mann's and Boetticher's crane-shots, Sirk's use of vertical movements in a moral context - each of these directors has a particular, though in its means not necessarily wholly exclusive manner of dramatizing and at the same time interpreting a situation - unobtrusively and above all, integrated into the narrative itself. Furthermore, there is a director's handling of the 'persona' of a star - Hawks' and Ford's use of John Wayne, Wilder's use of Marilyn Monroe in *SOME LIKE IT HOT* - undercutting or reinforcing pre-established expectations, in order to convey the better certain themes. All these elements are meant when we talk about a director's mise-en-scene, and it does imply that the form of the film, now understood to include the mise-en-scene, i.e. the various modes of **how** a film signifies - is logically prior to, and hence inseparable from **what** is being signified and communicated.

It also means that as a critical audience, we have to attain a certain level of abstraction, and to learn to see significant units where previously we had the impression of repetition, obtuseness, lack of sensibility, moral ineptitude and random assembly. Of course this is a dangerous recipe to advocate, because there is a lot of repetition, obtuseness etc. around in the cinema, and it would be patently absurd though alas not unthinkable, to pretend that every put-together B-feature by Michael Curtiz, Burt Kennedy or even Roger Corman, and every epic fiasco by a Stevens, Frankenheimer or Mankiewicz must eo ipso have the kind of coherence of a Ford, or the diversity of meaning of a Hitchcock or Lang.

Such excesses of the *auteur* theory are only avoidable if the hunt for themes in a director's work is supplemented by a careful investigation of the thematic constants in the American cinema as a whole, and if the zeal for detecting an individual directorial style, is matched by a thorough knowledge of other directorial styles, and if in general the search for meaning is more evenly spread over criteria other than themes and lastly, if not everything that is merely interesting, is immediately claimed to be profound.

And although I have spoken of a certain level of abstraction I might add that this does not mean an "intellectualization" of the American cinema, but rather the reverse, namely a way of talking intelligibly about precisely the non-intellectual aspects of an American movie and their aesthetic significance.

For even among the more serious critics and *auteur* theorists, there is a tendency to see the progression of a theme, whether in an individual film, or within the entire work of a director, too intellectually and abstractly, as the development of a moral argument, whose main purpose it is to act as a kind of philosophical commentary on life in general. There may be directors whose themes do show a progression, and whose work constitutes a 'philosophy of life' - Fritz Lang is perhaps the most obvious candidate - but to posit it as a kind of a-priori or to assume it implicitly, seems to me to be highly misleading, and it lands the critic in a straight-jacket entirely of his own making.

As a general rule, in order to judge what an American movie is worth, one ought to have - other than one's senses - some idea of the relation in which the form stands to subject and themes, which of course implies that one can also recognize those instances - even in good films - where a theme is only partially visualized on the screen, or a conception only imperfectly translated into action. Or again those cases, where there is, interference - be it from the producer, from a bad screenplay, unsuitable actors, or a director's apparent inability to warm to his assignment.

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In this context, it is pertinent to ask oneself whether a good film need necessarily always have a personal style. *Auteur* critics in the past often accepted this as a matter of course, though it creates the wellknown problem of the good film made by an otherwise undistinguished director. Instead of talking about a personal style which belongs to a particular director, one perhaps ought rather to speak of a film's specific style, which means theoretically, a good film will invariably reflect a specific approach of the mise-en-scene to its theme, and show evidence that the material has been worked in specifically cinematic terms. Such an approach may sometimes owe more to the conventions of a genre, the flair of a particular studio and crew, or to a felicitous adaptation of a well-constructed screenplay, but it will always need a competent or inspired director, though not necessarily a directorial personality.

Richard Fleischer's *VIOLENT SATURDAY* is an excellent example of a film which triumphs by its extraordinary functional mise-en-scene and where technical brilliance and a certain visual efficiency imposes itself far more strongly than Fleischer's individuality as an auteur. Indeed, the attraction of the 50s B-picture is the extraordinarily terse and compact way in which the best of them manage to tell their story. As such they are object-lessons in the art of the cinematic narrative, and demonstrate how in Hollywood sheer technical competence - often by a skilful use of editing techniques and montage effects - could body forth its own themes and moral attitudes. The sense of fatalism, of inevitability and of apocalyptic despair which characterizes the thriller in the late forties and fifties, with its aura of black romanticism, pervasive corruption, and its cynical drive for self-destruction, is as much the consequence of a montage-based type of visual logic (whose causality operates on the 'post ergo propter' principle) as it is due to glistening back-streets at night, fawn raincoats and sinister looking men in hats. Such values a director endorsed along with the assignment of a project, and at that time, the conjunction of genre and high-productivity rate put a great number of pre-defined elements - formal, pictorial, thematic - at a director's disposal, leaving him to exercise his talents of observation, of visual imagination within a strictly limited, but flexible frame of reference. Working in Hollywood has for most directors meant that instead of expressing individuality through personal themes, they could express personality through universal themes.

It was the genres which provided the artistic form without which the story was often nothing but a verbal message, and which forced directors to reflect about the specific language of their medium, and to develop a code whose virtues were efficiency, formal elegance and lucid simplicity. They developed an aesthetic functionalism whose aim was perfect legibility, and only secondly, individual expression. Yet it seems in retrospect that because a good Hollywood movie managed to combine what are essentially 'technocratic' aesthetic values with a basically humanist, "liberal" narrative tradition, certain moral and social concerns have always been implicitly affirmed, as the felt presence of at times a sensibility of great subtlety and intuition.

The most deplorable defect, to my mind, of so many commercial directors coming from television, is that this capacity of handling even a complex plot, such as, say that of Hawks' *BIG SLEEP* or Tourneur's *OUT OF THE PAST* in a sober and lucid manner, seems to have been completely lost. Owing perhaps to the harmful influence of the auteur theory and a falsely understood notion of the mise-en-scene, some directors indulge in a kind of baroque and ornate elaboration of basically simple plots, without there being so much as a shred of dramatic or thematic necessity for their stylistic grand-guignol. More and more, certain, alas, highly successful films seem to be stuffed with the pink cottonwool of zoom, split-screen, slow-motion and soft-focus, and where once a director sought psychological depth and a sense of the natural dynamics of action, a Peter Yates grovels on the floor in order to shoot a scene through Steve McQueen's legs.

The extent to which the studio-system and the work within genres, imposed a stylistic identity can perhaps most clearly be seen in the career of Losey, who, after he left Hollywood, took ten years to develop a directorial style both personal and specific. During all this time he made films in England that were unmistakeably constructed and shot in the manner of a Hollywood movie. From *THE SLEEPING TIGER* to *BLIND DATE* and *THE CRIMINAL*, Losey was always working on films in which he could express himself only in the oblique, but nonetheless highly effective stylization of a genre-director. Since *THE SERVANT* and *EVE* he often seems to have paid the price of eclecticism, for he has been experimenting with new modes of cinematic expression in a way a Bergman or Bunuel never experimented, however important changes have occurred in their view of the cinema. Losey's fate is symptomatic. Many Hollywood directors, who during the last decade have, by choice or by necessity, gone independent, seem today like exiles, cut off from the cinema they knew, and forced into the perilous realms of innovation and experiment. Only few have, like Losey, survived artistic shipwreck. And even such an old hand as Preminger appears to have temporarily lost his bearings.

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From the position which I have taken, the question of artistic value revolves to a large extent around the notion of aesthetic unity and formal coherence - as do, in a way, the questions of authorship and genre. Now, there seem to me several ways in which the classical Hollywood movie contrives to be coherent. Most important, it is through the unity of action. Because of its nature as a narrative genre, the American cinema creates a universe which is governed by a certain fundamental dramatic logic. Like the woof of a carpet, it holds together the fictional world, and allows the thematic and moral patterns to emerge. To put it schematically, Hollywood rigorously respects and adheres to a first-level verisimilitude, in which any change of time, of place, of protagonist, is internally motivated, and communicated to the audience through a cinematic language primarily destined to follow, as closely as possible, the dramatic and psychological exigencies of the action. As Walsh has said, there is only one way in which to shoot a scene, and that's the way which shows the audience what's happening next. Any consideration of the value of the mise-en-scene must in consequence be based on recognizing the primacy of the dramatic continuum over directorial 'self-expression', since whatever point - moral, intellectual, emotional - the director cares to make, he will have to ensure that it does not violate the transparency of his story-line. We can see at once the place and importance of the aesthetic virtues outlined above, namely efficiency, sobriety, elegance and simplicity as the condition sine qua non of Hollywood movie-making: they alone provide a film's formal coherence, precondition of any expressive or thematic

potential.

This does not mean that **every** film needs to have this narrative continuum - the more and more elliptical handling of the narrative in certain recent American films, and the anti-dramatic narratives of European directors disprove it -, but where the illusionist logic of the temporal-spatial unity is abandoned, the individual image radically changes its status, and - as I shall try to show - both its syntagmatic ('narrative') as well as its paradigmatic ('symbolic') uses are fundamentally altered. This, among the European directors, only Godard has grasped in its full significance, while Bunuel knew it all along.

To put it paradoxically, one might say that in the American cinema, it is the prima facie ontological autonomy of the events and situations vis-a-vis the characters, the illusion of a real world, which allows a Hollywood director to use story and intrigue 'abstractly'. As Erwin Panofski pointed out, for example, the radically different syntactical structure of the American cinema in comparison with literature makes it possible that a bad story can furnish a good film and vice versa.

A second type of unity, closely related to the dramatic unity of action, is of course the unity provided by the conventions of the genre. But if we look at the thriller-genre, we see that it not only possesses its own iconography, the force of a cinematic-thematic tradition to hold it together, but often has an added element, namely the unity of suspense. This special case of the dramatic continuum, - special, in that it presents evidence of an accelerated sense of causality and fatalism - operates occasionally at the expense of plausibility and verisimilitude. For the creation of suspense can often have a unifying force which successfully overplays plot-weaknesses and schematic characters.

Perhaps one of the most audacious films of this kind, which manages to persuade an audience of a dramatic inevitability purely by means of suspense, is Siegel's *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS*, where the final transformation of the girl into a zombie is in blatant contradiction to the supposed body-substitution which had previously motivated the film, for if a person could change simply through excessive fatigue and nervous exhaustion, what's the need for all the giant pods? Yet we are convinced by it, because Siegel's handling of the suspense, literally suspends both narrative logic and disbelief, in order to convey the more powerfully a different order of logic - call it the logic of existential fear - for which the pseudo-rational explanation is only a vehicle, the conveyor-belt of our involvement. And this is of course Siegel's thematic aim: to discredit a certain scientific positivism and its attendant petty-bourgeois conformism, in the name of a passionate appeal to elemental emotions.

What such a film as Siegel's does retain, however, despite its heavy formal and structural stylization, are two things, both very important in the American cinema - the behavioral realism of the actors, and the 'ordinariness' of the main protagonist. The latter exemplifies another kind of unity - namely that of the hero. Perhaps most, certainly some of the best Hollywood movies made during the 50s derive their persuasive aesthetic coherence from the way the dramatic weight is concentrated on a single person. Thus, the most common and unfailing manner of structuring a film is to have a central protagonist with a cause, a goal, a purpose - in short, a motivation for action which sustains the dramatic interest of a film, and which preferably contains an unflagging emotional charge. We think, for example, of the heroes in Anthony Mann's westerns, propelled as they are by their sense of justice, their urge for vengeance. Or - as a significant contract - of Boetticher's Randolph Scott characters, whose slow-burning emotional and moral impulses are so deeply buried and sublimated into a cool, detachedly ironic stoicism, that they surface as a wholly abstract - on the level of the mise-en-scene strongly geometrical - motif, which structures the action of, say, *COMANCHE STATION* into its curiously circular form.

The hero's central drive not only furnishes his identity - enhanced as it is by the physical **presence** of an established star - it also ensures the predominat ly unilinear (and that can include, of course, circular), yet essentially 'closed' development of the typical American movie, where a personal initiative a subjective, instinctual choice so often materializes as an objective necessity (through the mechanism of crime, guilt, etc.), finally to overtake the hero as his personal fate and destiny.

This, as one knows, is a typically Langian situation, and we find it in his three most famous American films, *FURY, YOU ONLY LIVE ONCE* and *THE BIG HEAT*. All these films start from a personal, subjective sense of injustice and moral outrage which triggers off a machinery that determines and dominates all the hero's subsequent actions. Lang, however, uses the stock dramatic device critically, in order to dismantle the ideology of personal initiative and private morality in a mass-society, while still giving his heroes the tragic dignity of a unique existence.

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In general terms the presence of a central protagonist means that a vast variety of plots and a diversity of directorial themes can nonetheless have a common structural denominator and a near-identical dramatic function. Hence the persistent impression that people in Hollywood movies always have a kind of dogged energy - not to give up in the face of adversity, to better their lot, to believe in the future, etc. - which has frequently been ridiculed and interpreted as evidence of a facile and insufferable optimism, a bogus craving for the happy ending. This view is an untenable simplification.

Rather, one ought to recognize that the happy ending is a structural constant, functioning like a coda in a musical context, or a trope in a rhetorical discourse. Once the story-line is no longer seen as the only or even the most significant part of the content, it would become apparent that there exists an important interrelation between the diversely motivated drives of the heroes - whether it is greed for money, thirst for adventure, social ambition, hate, vengeance, dreams of power - and the dramatic principle of action in the American cinema. For, as even the most cursory analysis of the narrative structure of half a dozen American movies of the 50s would show, a variety of socially and morally defined aims nevertheless rely for their aesthetic embodiment on an identical or significantly similar emotional substructure, governed by the articulation and distribution of psychic energy. One of the most significant

implications of this - and one that ought to give rise to a lot more controversy than it does - is that morality in the American cinema manifests itself in terms of aesthetic values, and that ethical choices are elaborated not on the basis of intellectual argument, but entirely by means of psychological pressures and needs. This factor has a momentous importance if we want to get a clearer picture about the ideological function of the American cinema, and I shall return to the point in due course.

Practically, two considerations impose themselves. Firstly, we note that in the majority of Hollywood films during the classical period, the living out of an emotional impulse or drive is accompanied and parallelled by a deepening of moral awareness, a growth and progress in the hero's consciousness, or exemplary death intervening, the consciousness of the audience. Through the psychic energy available in the person of the protagonist, if you like, through his essentially unreflected and often explicitly non-intellectual mode of perceiving and experiencing social and human reality, the movies conduct a kind of education of sensibility, a clarification of basic emotional responses which is of enormous cultural significance. The basic pattern of the Hollywood movie is an accumulative one: from simple impulse to experience of complexity. What a character has to come to terms with in so many movies, is the impossibility of instantaneous gratification.

This, as we know, is one of the primary cultural acts, and constitutes the creative principle par excellence. The movies show how the emotional potentials of a character have to disperse themselves in the labyrinth of the real world. Alternatively, in order to escape from a hateful and unresponsive world, they are impelled to constructing an imaginary world, an anti-reality which is tested against the forces and pressures of the real world. But this 'sublimation' of a desire for action is at the same time the driving force towards the spectacle, which of course, in its most grandiose form, is the cinema. Hollywood has taught America the collective virtues of cultural sublimation, of controlling the individual's creative and destructive impulses - always in the name of community values, the national interest, global survival. Yet, significantly, it has transmitted this message in a code which secures Hollywood's continuation. And that is also its greatness: like every art, its first and last reference is to itself. Like every genuinely cultural myth, its form is contradiction, its meaning, however, tautological.

If one were pressed to define by a single aesthetic feature the difference between the 50s and the Hollywood films of today and the late 60s, it would probably be the increasingly dislocated emotional identity of the central protagonists, and the almost total absence of the central drive and its dramatic mechanisms. Instead we have the comedies of Jerry Lewis, which draw from the distortions, the spasms, the interrupted flow of the emotional impetus their most subtle and disturbing effects. Or, as in Peckinpah's *WILD BUNCH* and countless other, lesser movies, we have heroes who shrug their shoulders and laugh uncontrollably for no apparent reason, only suddenly to break into outbursts of unmotivated and wholly irrational violence - evidence of an unsublimated energy which is no longer translated into clearly identifiable moral and social objectives. Individual violence, for example, in Ray or early Losey has a complex psychological and cultural **value** - it was a necessary step in the hero's education, and it provoked, as in Losey's *THE LAWLESS*, or in Siegel's *BODY SNATCHERS*, or Lang's *FURY* the ruthless collective and institutionalized violence of the forces of law and order, of the bigoted community, threatened by the outsider.

Today, despite all the talk about violence, directors seem to have lost this dual perspective on violence, they treat it either as a purely aesthetic **quantity**, or at best as the cheerfully admitted reflection of an aberrant national pathology. What in Penn is still couched in a form that understands itself as half-critical, half-apologetic, becomes in *BUTCH CASSIDY* a bland opportunism. Indeed, as always, it is the excessively aestheticising tendency of the modern commercial cinema, which reveals most palpably its artistic nihilism. For where Hollywood's great films of the classical tradition are above all critically percept ve is in depicting the emotional substructure of a particular social condition or individual crisis, by obsessively insisting on the irremediable contradiction between desire and fulfilment, between private frustration and the fantasies of glory, between the forces of the imagination and restrictive social behaviour - which is finally the existential rift between seeming and being, heritage of European romanticism and the puritan ethic. Today, these essential contradictions are being slurred over by a cult of the aesthetically pleasing.

Obviously, this is a complex process, since on the one hand, it reflects an actual change in American society and its predominant mood - one to which Hollywood, as usual has reacted with uncanny speed, showing that it still has its finger on the nation's emotional pulse, even if this is now the pulse of a much younger generation. On the other hand, it raises structural and dramatic problems which only few directors have recognized, and none has yet satisfactorily resolved. Kazan's *THE ARRANGEMENT* is a typical example of a film that tries to confront the problem of the unmotivated hero, whose life as a result, falls into its disconnected parts, and is only patched together by the negative force of emotional stress and the withdrawal of sexual gratification, - but the analytic-reflective mode of narration remains unsatisfactory, precisely because Kazan cannot resolve the aesthetic problem of finding a principle of unity, which would hold the film together on the level of motivation. *EASY RIDER*, by contrast, relies on a perfectly conventional dramatic structure, with the motif of the journey - which, in the true tradition of Hollywood's black romanticism, can only lead to death, - underscoring the goal-oriented motivation of its heroes.

What makes the film interesting, is that it signalizes this goal-orientation more or less as explicitly nostalgic, as a journey into the national past - thus having the best of both worlds. And just as in the classical movie, the hero learns something from his quest about himself and about the world, so Billy and Captain America learn the lesson of total failure - that they cannot live among the hippies, that the American South is murderous, and that, in short, "we blew it". Given the present ideological climate, such an admission may seem the sign of a new realism. In terms of the ideological "content" of the **form**, however, the sacrificial deaths of the heroes spell a far more mystifying and confused message than a great movie of the 50s - obsessed with a similar presentment of failure - would ever have propagated. In fact, one may well argue that *EASY RIDER* ends by affirming a moral stance which Nicholas Ray's movies once took as their starting point.

(to be continued)

Thomas ELSAESSER

the american cinema *3. an outlook*

"Il n'y a pas à se le cacher; ce que nous traversons en ce moment, ce sont les années noires du cinéma." Jacques Lourcelles, *Présence du Cinéma* **No. 24-25, Autumn 1967.**

Crisis and transition seem the dominant moods of the American cinema at the present time; yet, every year, denigrators of Hollywood proclaim the death of the old form. The economic figures alone belie this; it is surprising to discover how attenuated has been this 'death' of the classical cinema. The period of 1951-1961 was crucial, for within that time, film production per year fell from 391 to 131; over the same period, audiences dropped from ninety million to forty-two million. That was ten years ago, within which time developments, both artistic and economic, have definitely occurred concerning the exact nature of the American commercial cinema, but the expanse of the period would seem to contradict opinion of demise. The aim of this article is a brief investigation of the implications of the end of the classical tradition, the voluntary or enforced silence of the veteran directors, (Ford, Walsh, Lang, etc.), whose work over a space of fifty years constitutes the component parts of this essential classicism. With the new decade, the farewell to this tradition is inevitable, and it is perhaps difficult for the disillusioned enthusiast to restrain his nostalgia for the 'Golden Age'. But although MONOGRAM recognises the sentiment, we do not intend to found an editorial policy on such self-indulgence.

▲ **Steve McQueen Lee Remick in Robert Mulligan's BABY THE RAIN MUST FALL**

Paradoxically, it is at this moment of apparent decay that the tradition must be investigated, its achievement must be analysed and evaluated, its limitations defined. Most of all, a perspective must be attained. With the state of English film criticism at the present time, almost no advance on this investigation is apparent, beyond facile cult interest. That it is immensely important is unnecessary to state, for the influence of Hollywood, whether beneficient or hostile, pervades almost every area of the cinema, and an interest in the art itself compels an interest in the American cinema.

However, the sphere of this article must first of all be delineated. With the collapse of the tyrannical, monolithic nature of Hollywood, sentiments of optimism have been expressed, a realization that radical experimentation can now manifest itself. Most obviously, this has been demonstrated by the American 'Underground' cinema, whose brand of modernism is patently schismatic. I remain critically unqualified to describe and evaluate this amorphous and influential movement, and will not make any attempt to discuss it in this present article, whose purpose is to attempt some analysis of the more traditionally modernistic trends that have arisen from the American commercial cinema. The directors discussed here are those who seem to us to appear aware of the problems inherent in their more traditional modes of expression, the movies are those who have assimilated these problems by their intrinsic nature.

Of the many consequences of such comparatively modern factors in the transition in Hollywood as increased liberalism of censorship, and the stylistic influence of television, the most important is the fragmentation of the narrative structure which provided a unified framework, and which has been reflected in the dissolution of the paradigms of genre. The linear energy at the base of this framework, externalised most concretely in the notion of the quest, but to found even in the most apparently undramatic works in the American cinema, (as the respective oeuvres of Hawks

and Tourneur testify), has been diluted, but not dissipated. The first evidence of a novel structure appeared with the 'adult' melodramas of the late fifties and early sixties, in which emphasis was on emotional conflict of character embodied in a more flexible narrative framework, where lineation was subsumed in a finer ambiguity of expression. Thus, in a representative movie such as *STRANGERS WHEN WE MEET* (1960) of Richard Quine, the emotional conflicts of the various characters were concretized in the building of the perfect house, designed by the frustrated artist for the successful novelist. With the magnificent image of the completed but unfurnished house, these conflicts were either resolved or remained ambiguous in an excellent equilibrium of effect which, by dispensing with a contrived conclusion, demonstrated an 'instructive dissonance'.

It is easy to see how important this development has been to the American cinema if we glance at several modern movies which attempt to readopt the notion of the quest in the symbol of the journey as moral/emotional dialectic (cf. *EASY RIDER*, Francis Ford Coppola's *THE RAIN PEOPLE*). What has not been realized in such experiments is the degree to which the **resolution** of the quest, the goal, the ultimate achievement, dominates and codifies the elements that compose the structure, imparting a dynamic energy which is otherwise absent. A movie such as *EASY RIDER* is concerned with the search for identity, and thus is unsure of its true nature; it becomes composed of disparate elements whose only real connection is the journey itself. Instead of the journey acting as externalization of interior drive, the burden is forced on the skeleton itself, inevitably schematizing the movie and jeopardizing any meaning it may have. Similarly, in the movies of Monte Hellman, especially in *THE SHOOTING*, the force of the journey metaphor is negated by a mise-en-scene which emphasizes a pre-determined ritualism; the quest becomes a circle. With the lack of dynamism imparted by a strictly formal lineation, the central metaphor appears infinitely contrived. There is an important consequence of this; for without the corresponding emotional intensity, a whole range of metaphoric articulation employed by Hollywood becomes redundant. Without the pulsation of concrete drive, the contrivance of the mechanism itself is exposed. It is this consequence that Kazan fails to realize in *THE ARRANGEMENT*, in his use of the persons of the hero and his alter-ego, when they appear on the screen at the same time. The intention is clear enough, but, short of dynamic emotional impact, the device does not convince. In *THE ARRANGEMENT*, we find a chaotic attempt to synthesize classical and modern techniques; consequently, the limitations of the classical are silhouetted, because they are not endorsed by the requisite emotion.

The reason why a pre-ordained narrative framework is no longer valid seems clear enough; it assumes unquestioningly a belief in the attainment of identity, and the validity of instinctive action. These are beliefs which cannot be sustained in the climate of modern America. An example relevant here is of course the gradual collapse of the efficacy of the heroic individual in the American cinema, demonstrated by movies from Walsh's *THE NAKED AND THE DEAD*, and Fuller's *SHOCK CORRIDOR* through to Schaffner's *PATTON: LUST FOR GLORY*, which demonstrate that the individualist stance is that of the maniac, and that the price of true identity is insanity. The hero, as shown in the opening sequence of *PATTON*, is reducible to a set of objects. Identity is only attainable through an evolutionary process, not by the corrupted force of a tyrannical free agency.

In *DUEL AT DIABLO*, made in 1964 by Ralph Nelson, a seminal film in many respects, the structure develops from an aborted quest to a gradually conceived situation, within which the characters lose their false, consciously-willed roles, and develop towards a truer identity. The army scout surpasses his naive plan of revenge, the Negro dandy reverts to his previous military role, the captain becomes truly heroic, not through the blind futility of his dreams, but through a noble effort to save the troop that he despises, the half-caste girl accepts her white identity while retaining her native dignity. In *DUEL AT DIABLO*, the action is no longer free and instinctive, but elliptical, consciously planned and executed: in this contradiction of genre pattern, it defines the modern movement. The accent is on character development within the confines of a clearly delineated situation, but the pattern that the situation evolves is not an absolutely determined one; there is an erosion in the strict outline of the paradigm. Characters constantly surprise the audience in their mode of behaviour; an example is the husband of the Indian girl who commences the movie as an unsympathetic figure, then gradually arouses our sympathy and the girl's renewed love, before it is revealed that he scalped the Indian wife of the army scout.

Hence, a prerequisite of the modern movie that attempts a coherent investigation of the reality which it analyzes is the ambiguous, open-ended situation, while nevertheless retaining a certain formal quality. Robert Mulligan's *BABY THE RAIN MUST FALL* commences with the arrival of Lee Remick and her small daughter in an American small-town in order to find her husband who is a convict in the nearby penetentiary, newly released on parole, and ends with her departure once again. Its whole trajectory reveals a sensibility aware of the problems of cinematic form arising from the dialectic between formal discipline and a sense of the contingent. Steve McQueen plays the husband who sings in a rock band against the orders of the police; he is the embodiment of the redundancy of pure energy, (symbolized in the scene where he futilely chases a truck down a highway in a final, desperate attempt to evade the police, eventually falling exhausted by the side of the road), which no long has efficacy in a dense, elliptical reality. He rebels against the apparently atavistic power that an old woman who has secured his parole for him wields against him, but Mulligan renders this attitude false in the scene around the old house within which the woman is dying, by deliberately constructing an unconvincingly 'eerie' atmosphere, as if out of a completely separate film. Eventually, when she dies, leaving him nothing in her will, McQueen tries to dig up her grave in a pathetic, insane attempt to shrug off her influence.

In *BABY THE RAIN MUST FALL*, Mulligan manages to weave the wealth of detail into a firm but flexible structure; his aim is the intimate rather than the grand metaphor, in his attempt to render the unique world of personal relations rather than the clear world of action. An example of this comes in the scene where McQueen is beaten up. Instead of showing the fight as a dramatic climax, Mulligan dissolves halfway through the scene, because for him action is only important in the way it affects the central husband-and-wife relationship; the next shot shows McQueen's shadow on the door of the cabin where they are staying, while inside the girl is putting the child to bed, demonstrating how every action of McQueen alienates him from his family. In a touching scene, McQueen sings to his wife and child as they sit on the porch of the cabin, on the outskirts of town, by the highway, beside them a dance poster advertising the rock band. It is which perfectly described the intimate, personal atmosphere that Lee Remick strives towards, the self-enclosed world of the family. It is this equilibrium of the child and the young tree which she plants outside the cabin, and the suffering hope of the wife which confers on the ending a continued sense of potential. Mulligan's achievement in *BABY, THE RAIN MUST FALL* is a masterpiece in miniature, a movie which conveys ambiguity by concrete precision in the mise-en-scene, through the subtlety of the metaphors, which convey perfectly the fragility of the situation.

However, it is no coincidence that the finest director of the decade, Blake Edwards, is primarily a comic artist, although he has proved himself equally talented in the thriller genre, (*GRIP OF FEAR*), and in the melodrama, (*DAYS OF WINE AND ROSES*). The concerns of American comedy have always devolved on the question of identity, the conflict of the private and the public role. However, the comedy film has undergone an important metamorphosis recently, in as far as its subject has been treated with a more bitter irony than before, in keeping with the pathetic inability of the individual to achieve any truth in his existence, (cf. the familiar screen persona of Jerry Lewis, for example). Jean Douchet has defined Edwards' vision thus: " C'est, si l'on veut, et pour être un peu sociologique, la peinture de l'inadaptation de l'Americain moyen dans sa propre civilization, et de son impuissance à obtenir le bonheur qu'elle lui promet". From the social into the universal; never has the American dream seemed so fragile as in the films of Edwards. His brittle, incisive comedy is a reaction to the modern condition of the world. It is his delicacy that saves him from the brash self-parody of Tashlin or Wilder, (*SHERLOCK HOLMES* excepted); the detailed precision of effect, and equilibrium of presentation noted earlier in Mulligan that enables him to work within a traditional framework without any detriment to artistic expression.

Edwards' taste is for the situation, and his movie *THE GREAT RACE* is a hilarious homage to the passing of the classical narrative tradition, taking formulaic conceptions of character, (the dashing hero in white, the swarthy, mustachoid villain and his ludicrous associate), and converting them into farcical strip-cartoon caricatures. As I have already noted in a short article on the director, (*Brighton Film Review* No.20), many of his movies are dilations of a static situation, (particularly *HIGH TIME, WHAT DID YOU DO IN THE WAR DADDY?* and *THE PARTY*), within which characters define their true roles. In *THE PARTY*, Edwards constructed his movie around Peter Sellers and a single set, the large, expansive house of a film tycoon, in which the false mechanical world of the bourgeoisie is inexorably revealed as deadening. Only the ironic detachment of an Edwards could impart coherence to such a conception; this he achieves with his slow-burn gags, which establish relations between people despite artificial social barriers, (the caviar gag for example, where the smell of the caviar is transmitted from hand to hand). The camera rests with an objective viewpoint as reality is usurped by farce and unrestricted action, so that observation of social 'moeurs' is gradually replaced by observation of the dissolution into chaos which Sellers precipitates, as surely as he has destroyed the entire film set in the pre-credit sequence. For Edwards, the veneer of civilized existence, the 'plastic forms of urban life' as Sarris terms it, is thin indeed; all that is necessary for destruction is the innocent agent of chaos who sets off a rigorous causality whose destination is the realm of the absurd. Important to Edwards is a detailed gradation of this chain-reaction, expressed through a constant return to a basic gag with variations, (cf. the antics of the drunken waiter in *THE PARTY*). The movement towards chaos is a gradual one; the universe of the director wills this liberating and yet sinister metamorphosis because his own absurd logic dominates the process of the movie. Ultimately, all Edwards' gags are symptomatic of a moral condition, metaphors for a human situation; although preserving a comic autonomy, his humour is dark and serious. With the final situation of the strangled waiter gag, Edwards demonstrates that it is the system which is self-defeating, that it is responsible for the chaos rather than the character who first made it possible, whose function is simply that of a catalyst. In *THE PARTY*, the comedy is not inhibited by any prior determination to achieve significance; the meaning is derived from the delicate comic structure of the whole movie. It is an advantage of the classical comedy picture that it may be interpreted on several levels of meaning; it is not necessary to imbue it with a contemporary significance to enable it to comment on human behaviour.

For it will be noticed that the **basis** of Edwards' comic method differ very little from the original humour of Chaplin or Laurel and Hardy. He has evidently studied the great comedians, and, absorbing their art, has used it as a technical spring-board from which he can articulate his specifically modern concerns. An example here is the chicken gag from *THE PARTY*, which is derived from a Chaplin short, as are the gags centred around the 'in-out' doors between the dining-room and the kitchen in the same film. But, most importantly, it is the tone to which these gags contribute that has been transmuted; Edwards' humour is malicious in the extreme, and axiomatic slapstick gags are employed as an endorsement of the sinister atmosphere.

Blake Edwards is the finest director working in the American commercial cinema at the present time, because he has assimilated the relevant features of the classical tradition and reworked them in order to express a contemporary view of the reality that confronts him. Because of his awareness of the tradition, he has managed to lay a foundation, demonstrate concrete points of reference for the manner in which he employs certain cinematic techniques. The problem with the contemporary American cinema is its intrinsic lack of frames of reference; with an inability to forge entertainment formulas which will guarantee financial success, it has increasingly grasped blindly at trends, particularly in relation to the youth market. With this sudden influx of potential subject material however there has been no fusion of content with the appropriate form. For example, the style of recent movies whose concern has been student unrest or drug-taking has usually devolved on gratuitous technical trickery, (use of huge zooms, hand-held camera etc.), whose aim is superficial 'aesthetic' effect, (*THE STRAWBERRY STATEMENT, MEDIUM COOL*). This is not, of course, to exclude the possibility of eventual consonance in the future, simply to point out that no engagement with the subject-matter can be possible if the 'style' is directed towards such superficial ends, without any sense of structure or the organic relation of every frame to a total conception of the movie itself. This article is a plea for such a sense of form; the best of the American commercial cinema demonstrates it. But it will be up to figures such as Edwards and Mulligan to show how much further the narrative framework can instructively take us.

Peter LLOYD

FIGURES IN A LANDSCAPE

In his late films, Losey has become increasingly concerned with the tensions of a closed situation. With an austere, cerebral eye, (at its finest in the intensive candour of *SECRET CEREMONY*, at its most banal in the contrived ritual of *THE SERVANT*) he has explored the ramifications of a situation in which the individual, turned in upon himself, achieves only tragic self-negation. Imposed, stifling decor has been at the heart of these movies, the universe constructed by a character as protection, which is revealed as potentially destructive, (cf. the palatial voids of *BOOM* and *SECRET CEREMONY*). The oppression of these environments has, in *FIGURES IN A LANDSCAPE*, been transferred to universal proportions; the two fleeing protagonists, the tough veteran Mac (Robert Shaw), and the inexperienced Ansell (Malcolm McDowell), find the landscape across which they move inherently hostile. In the deliberate zoom-out from a view of a platoon of soldiers hunting them down, Losey shows this; the soldiers in their khaki uniforms, are gradually, before our eyes integrated with the scrubland itself. The landscape seems to vibrate with an insidious life of its own.

Ostensibly, the theme of *FIGURES* is education and individuality. The two concepts have been intricately associated in the work of Losey, since their original affirmation in *THE BOY WITH THE GREEN HAIR*. They often take the form of a relationship between an older and a younger protagonist, (cf. *BLIND DATE, KING AND COUNTRY, ACCIDENT*), whose mutual experiences reveal new levels of awareness, usually at the expense of moral efficacy. Ansell, the young soldier who has accompanied the hard, bitter Mac on his escape from prison faces initiation into the uncompromising world of the older man. Eventually he reaches a certain level of self-reliance, but this baptism is inevitably at the expense of innocence. This can be seen most clearly by a comparison of the manner in which Losey shoots the two important individual murders in the movie, those of the goatherd in the beginning, and the guard in the power-house, after the battle in the cane-field. It is important that the killing of the goatherd takes place off-screen, because its significance lies inherently in Ansell's reaction to it; he has refused to participate. As Mac goes off to perform the murder, the camera rests on a close-up of Ansell; then, as the sound of Mac's boots kicking the goatherd to death are heard on the soundtrack, the camera moves round Ansell slowly, demonstrating the awakening realization of what the killing constitutes in terms of survival, its implicit necessity, until placed behind his back, Mac returns into frame, railing at his companion. The second killing is, however, performed by Ansell himself; the camera waits behind with Mac, while the younger man advances to the power-house. The intended victim is seen framed through a small window, and, as Ansell cuts the sentry's throat, Losey cuts to a close-up, showing the details of the killing. Far from being a gratuitous device, the close-up is significant because it represents to Ansell and the audience, the reality of the murder; only since the battle in the cane-field has Ansell approached an awareness of this reality, and its attendant sublimation of a queasy innocence in the predominant will to survival.

However, what is most interesting about Losey's movie is its structure; in as far as the director has apparently chosen to reinvestigate the implications of the structure which conferred on the American cinema its dynamism and which constituted the classical aesthetic. The structure of *FIGURES* is the structure of the quest, the concrete canalization of energy; the trajectory is from the lowland sea to the high mountains. However, the presentation of the quest demonstrates its essentially reflective nature; the structure does not contain the internal coherence bestowed on, for example, a Walsh movie of the forties or early fifties, by virtue of the classical paradigm. The relationship between the figures in the landscape and the helicopter seem less a chase than a protracted harassment; instead of the drive of action constituting the central core of the movie, Losey uses it as punctuation, (note how the presentation of action is sudden, explosive; the helicopter appearing over the ridge as Mac and Ansell walk down to the olive grove, or the ambush in the town square). One can perceive a shift in emphasis here; accent on character relations is intensified, action is relegated to the role of catalyst.

In fact, like all good films, *FIGURES IN A LANDSCAPE* can be viewed as a reflection on the art of the cinema, and, in the portrayal of the two central characters, we can find an attempt, on Losey's part, to symbolize his own dialectic on the nature, and the contemporary relevance of, the classical tradition; in fact, this aspect of the movie strikes the critic with more force than that which attempts to pass the film off as a serious allegory on the human condition, (an aspect which Losey fortunately minimizes as far as the scenario allows). In *FIGURES*, there is large scope for a critique of the fatuous 'lyrical' cinema, to which modern commercial cinema has been treating us since the pre-established traditions collapsed, and Losey utilizes this to the fullest extent. There are, for example, several shots which show us the helicopter in flight, accompanied not by the natural soundtrack but by the eerie film score. This suffices as an example of the trend of gratuitously 'immediate' aesthetic effect which some directors imagine can replace an image which derives its full force of meaning within the structure of the whole. In *FIGURES*, however, Losey relates it to the character of Mac, who gradually obsesses himself with the illusory freedom that the flight of the helicopter represents. For Mac is the embodiment of stasis; in one shot in a church, where the pair have taken refuge after the alarm has been raised, Losey frames Mac at the end of a row of statues. The veteran soldier can only exist in a world with tangible frames of reference, the world of the jungle, an existence of continual crisis; the helicopter embodies the illusion of omnipotence, of omnipresence, but in fact fails in its duty through an inability to recognize the fundamental, although equivocal world of human contingency where Mac can survive. Between the two is the nebulous figure of Ansell, who is unfortunately borne down by his capacity as the allegorical figure of youth and opportunity, but who, through his experience, will find a civilized equilibrium in the modern world.

Mac cannot cross his own border; Ansell's anguished cry of "what about me?" will inevitably go unanswered. Mac has taught him all that it is possible for him to teach. His is indeed a romantic death, as Losey choreographs magnificently his last moments, the swoop of the camera when placed in the helicopter, the slow movements of his body observed with an immobile camera. *FIGURES IN A LANDSCAPE* exemplifies this ability to utilize the movements of his camera, (cf. the hand-held sequences early on when the helicopter harasses the pair in open country, or the deliberate economy of the sequences in the village where they disturb the mourning woman), which can only be derived from the rigours for self-effacement which his apprenticeship in Hollywood demanded. Similarly, the direct method of filming the battle in the cane-field, (mirrored by the elemental imagery of fire and water in this sequence), confers considerably more sense of the physical than the ritualistic cop-outs of Penn, Peckinpah or the commerical Italian directors.

FIGURES IN A LANDSCAPE is an ambiguous movie; its final camera movement, shot from within the helicopter, is a steep pull away from Mac's body up to a height from where we survey the stretch of country over which the two men have travelled. It is the cinematic equivalent of a question-mark, and unites the double perspective, of subject and art, that the film demonstrated. In it, Losey looks back at the ground that he has covered, and implicit in the regard is the recognition that the achievement that it represents is inviolable but also irrecoverable. But, if any 'commercial' director possesses the ability to break new ground, the successes and the failures of *FIGURES IN A LANDSCAPE* prove it to be Losey.

Peter LLOYD

FIGURES IN A LANDSCAPE (GB, 1970) dir.: Joseph Losey, Scr.: Robert Shaw based on a novel by Barry England, phot.: Henri Alkan (Panav. Technic.) mus. : Richard Rodney Bennett; Robert Shaw (MacConnachie), Malcolm McDowell (Ansell).

L'ENFANT SAUVAGE

Truffaut's *L'ENFANT SAUVAGE* is an important film for a director whose films have sometimes been dismissed as works which are attractive but somehow lightweight because they fail to engage intellectually. In the case of *L'ENFANT SAUVAGE* the break with the past is particularly evident both in the subject matter and the way in which it is treated. The script is based upon the account which Jean Itard wrote in 1801 of his attempts to educate a savage boy found in the forests of Aveyron, a treatise in which Itard pioneered the socially radical view that subnormality should be attributed to lack of educational opportunity rather than to any inherited defectiveness. The conflict, familiar to us from Truffaut's earlier films, between an individual and the society which seeks to change him, is present here, but we are no longer invited to sympathise with the victim nor is his point of view allowed to dominate, so that the environment is treated as something undifferentiatedly hostile. Itard also demands our sympathies, as well as the boy, although in neither case is our admiration allowed to be unqualified. Although Truffaut creates no significant dialogue which is not contained in Itard's book, it is interesting that the way in which the story is rendered cinematically tends to make Itard appear in a rather less attractive light than he does in the book. Truffaut plays up a quality of coldness about Itard, a single-minded devotion to the task in hand and an obliviousness toward the suffering of Victor (the name he gives the wild boy) which is barely to be found in the journal, where Itard presents himself as a sensitive humanist. In the journal, for example, Itard writes of how Victor is reduced to tears by his punishments and of his own regret at the inhuman curiosity of man who tore him from his innocent and happy life, while in the film Itard is pictured writing the e words at his desk while in the same room Victor weeps uncomforted. We are invited to identify with Itard but this identification is only one element in the complex of attitudes toward Itard which the film suggests.

Itard, played by Truffaut himself in the film, is seen to be a complexly motivated character. He makes his first appearance in the film writing a letter expressing his interest in obtaining custody of the boy so that he might observe him in order to obtain evidence of what man owes to his education, and in due course the boy is seen, on admission to the deaf-mute asylum where Itard works, being handled as an inanimate object while his height, skin colour, teeth are examined. But at the moment when Itard is seen conceiving the plan of educating the boy in his own home his decision is seen to follow from his disapproval of the way in which the boy has been exhibited by the janitor at the asylum as if he were a wild animal. In opposition to the attitude that the boy might as well earn his keep as a circus side show, and in the face of the scepticism of the educational authorities and the official diagnosis of the boy as an imbecile, Itard champions the boy's innate intelligence and devotes his time to the attempt to educate the boy. Yet the comparison with the treatment which Victor receives in Itard's home from the housekeeper, Mme. Guerin, shows that Itard is not motivated by simple benevolence alone but also by an obsession which often demands the disregard of Victor's inclinations for the sake of needs which he does not recognise. Mme. Guerin gives the boy physical care and the undemanding affection of a mother; in contrast there is a minimum of physical contact between Itard and the boy while in the interests of Victor's education Itard devises tasks for him which are progressively more taxing. At one point she turns on Itard and makes the pertinent criticism that Victor is never allowed to enjoy himself as other boys are for all his pleasures are turned into exercises. The film can contain this observation and also insist that if Mme. Guerin had had her way and Victor were treated with simple kindness, he would have remained an imbecile. He is seen performing small household tasks for the housekeeper but he is not stretched, so that when for example he helps her to shell peas Victor is given a smaller bowl to fill so that it will appear to him that he has achieved more than she has. Itard is more demanding because his estimate of Victor is a higher one than hers'. Simple mother love is contrasted against something like paternal affection, the main element in which is the desire to be able to respect and communicate with an intelligent fellow being. As Itard says when Victor rebels against the deliberate imposition of an unjust punishment, "It would have been sweet to me could I have made my pupil understand and have told him how this proof - (that the feeling of justice was no longer foreign to him) - filled my heart with satisfaction." The shot of Itard and Victor observing together the effect on a candle flame of the utterance of the vowel sounds is a compact image of Itard's successful communication with Victor. The concluding image, that of Itard watching Mme. Guerin leading Victor upstairs after his voluntary return from his escape while the tutor reflects that lessons will begin again tomorrow, sums up the isolation and the poignancy of Itard's position: the care which Mme. Guerin takes of Victor is of a kind which is immediately appreciated and what Itard gives him is of no obvious use to him.

There are three centres of emotional gravity in the film - Itard, the maternal Guerin and the anarchic boy himself. Incapable of speech he is seen engagin g in a sensuous communication with the natural landscape of his original habitat which contrasts strongly with the more conventional attachment of Itard to the social world and its inhabits. This contrast between nature and culture is the pivot around which the visual elements in the film are organised. Itard is pictured generally within a study in which the predominant figures are geometrical and light pours in from a window so that the objects in the room are clearly defined; the boy is first seen emerging from deep undergrowth and there is a dimness and lack of definition about the picture which suggests a tribute to the silent cinema.

These early scenes are echoed later in the film when Itard is pictured gazing through the window at the figure of Victor in the moonlit garden, barely grasping the ecstatic contemplation of the boy as he seeks to merge himself with the light. Itard reports on his success in weaning the boy away from his reliance on the senses of touch and smell, in training him to depend on sight and hearing also, so that he begins to use all five senses normally. Visually however the film sets up a contrasting opposition between the sensuousness of Victor's absorption in the natural world and Itard's narrow dependence on the written word and on vision at the expense of the other senses. Itard is repeatedly pictured at his desk writing about his experiences; on their daily visits to a neighbouring farm, while Victor is seen revelling in the meadow outside the house, Itard is seen through the open door inside the house playing a board game. While Victor is thus associated with natural landscapes Itard is associated with cultural artifacts, like the chequers, and the wooden alphabets and other educational aids which he devises to help Victor in the task of acquiring the basic social skills, principally that of reading. The mechanism of social repression is especially identified with the medium of print: because Victor must learn to read, it is necessary for him to undergo the ordeal of education; because Itard is attentive to the information that can be conveyed by writing and speech, his mind is closed to wider imaginative possibilities.

The film is thus visually dense in a way which elaborates and comments on the complex relation between Victor and Itard while retaining a thematic purity in that there is hardly anything in the film which is merely decorative or irrelevantly spectacular. The conflict is pared down to essentials, to the relationship between master and pupil, without much sense of an external ongoing reality. A logical development of Truffaut's tendency to deromanticise his heroes in the interests of critical perspective, Victor is no more than a bundle of instincts, a pure victim who is incapable of acting against his environment in his own interests for he is incapable of action in the sense of motivain the film, there is thus a substitution of imminent development for dramatic interaction, in the sense that the implications of Itard's and Victor's positions are explored but there is little change in those positions once the two have met. The development of the film depends not on plot, which is virually non-existent, but rather on the way in which the viewpoints of these two characters is continually contrasted and illuminated, so that our judgement is demanded at every point.

Vivienne LEWIS

L'ENFANT SAUVAGE (France, 1969) dir.: Francois Truffaut, scr.: F.T. and Jean Gruault based on the diaries of Jean Itard, photo.: Nestor Almendros; Jean Pierre Cargol (Victor), F.T. (Jean Itard), Francoise Seigner (Madame Guerin).

Beatrice's cry from *The Changeling* - "I must trust somebody" - seems to echo around the spy movie, eloquently testifying to the failure and death of humanity.

Just as the Western has moved from its heroic past, from affirmation of successful individualism and integrity to the display of the traditional hero as a defeated and anachronistic figure, so the spy genre has come increasingly to engage the attention of film makers and function as a suitable metaphor for the contemporary existential state. Hitchcock has taken up again the themes and situation of *THE LADY VANISHES* (1938) in *TORN CURTAIN* and *TOPAZ*. Sidney Lumet has briefly fulfilled his promise in the excellent *THE DEADLY AFFAIR*, and

THE KREMLIN LETTER (USA, 1970) dir.: John Huston, scr.: J.H. and Gladys Hill based on the novel by Noel Behn, phot.: Ted Scaife Richard Boone (Ward), Bibi Andersson (Erika Boeck), Max von Sydow (Vladimir Kosnov), Patrick O'Neill (Charles Rone), Orson Welles (Bresanavitch), Lila Kedrova.

John Huston has finally returned to the film noir and turned in one of his few completely satisfying films since *THE MALTESE FALCON*

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Gilles Jacob in his note on Huston "Mockery and Morality" in *Cinema Moderne* refers to

> "eroticism and the cruelty, the strangeness, the agonising suspense and shock images of the post-war American crime film"

an epoch marked by the work of Dassin, Siodmak and Huston that has now passed. But in *THE KREMLIN LETTER* the spy genre, the film noir of now, Huston has recovered his direction and moved back into a world like that of *THE MALTESE FALCON, THE ASPHALT JUNGLE* and *TREASURE OF THE SIERRA MADRE* where his sense of "eroticism and cruelty" may be given full play.

The raising of audience expectations of violence and sexual adventure and playing on those expectations in a spirit of nervous titillation has long been part of Huston's procedure and has provoked similar qualifications and misgivings to those aroused by the allied movement towards the celebration of a hero who owes no allegiance but to his own authenticity in a kind of crypto-facism. But in *THE KREMLIN LETTER* the nervous tension and sexual teasing endured by the audience function in a coherent expressive structure rather than, as in the past, an enjoyment of nervous thrills for their own sake. The drag scenes, lesbianism, addiction, female wrestling, homosexuality, masochism and sex murders of *THE KREMLIN LETTER* are wholly consonant with the display of a world of betrayal, contingent violence and the subsumation of individuals and their personal concerns to an instrumental use as the servants of others and of the state. The themes of violence and betrayal that have animated Huston in earlier movies are now voiced in a coherent contemporary setting; Huston has finally found a vehicle enabling him to express his perception of human behaviour as the acts of hunters and hunted within a modern realistic context.

The film begins showing a fragmented but causally associated world: Rone's mission although mysterious is a purposive directed endeavour and the fragmentation that exists is geographical; indeed the association of disparate places and personalities could be said to affirm a connected world of interdependence. One axis of the typology of the traditional spy movie is established; the recruitment of the Highwayman's gang shows the West as colourful, hedonistic, tolerant and cosmopolitan. John Huston himself, in a masterly cameo performance, sounds the sole warning note over Rone's departure from institutionalized group endeavour, the world of loyalty, the U.S. Navy, towards individuated action. There is no question of our response, the movement of the charismatic hero from an authoritarian and collectivist order to the rich and humorous association of extravagant individuals in the Tillinger foundation is an unqualified advance.

Association and identification with the West is enforced through the pleasure the audience vicariously derives from the group's individual activities - something for everyone from George Sanders to Barbara Parkins - an association that is cemented in the nervous excitement with which an audience contemplates the exposure of Barbara Parkins' crutch to an explosion: a tension that is relieved by her success and which only in retrospect can be seen as representative of the ways of cruel and treacherous people. An incident for which Gilles Jacob's formulation "eroticism and violence" is tailor-made.

The other axis, that of the Soviet Union, is established in the consummate sequences introducing Kosnov. The delight offered by long mobile Premingeresque takes, outside and inside the prison (one take of car descending hill, entering prison yard and passengers alighting - one take of Soviet officials climbing staircase and entering cell corridor) is mitigated by the sombre tones and limited colour range of the images and by Kosnov's deliberate mystification of his companions and order for arbitrary killings.

The typology has been clearly established - Soviet Union mysterious, implacable, sombre and cole; the West hedonistic, colourful and open. The forthcoming struggle to be between a loose association of individuals bound by mutual knowledge and an alienated and cruel authoritarianism.

The association of the Tillinger group with pleasure, trust and voluntarism lasts until their entry into the Soviet Union and is affirmed and cemented by the self-sacrifice of the Highwayman for the success of the group's mission. Boone's attack on Rone and the corruption and torture of the Potkin are acceptable in the context of the group proving themselves to each other and establishing conditions necessary to the success of the mission. Identification with the Westerners as a positive force is so successfully established that assent to the corruption of Sonia Potkin is freely given. Her seduction and the torture of her father marks the beginning of a systematic programme of corruption and betrayal, a pattern that informs the behaviour of the "other side" and establishes a world in which treachery and exploitation characterize human action. Kosnov owes his position to the betrayal of Sturdevant and the torture of his associates, Yogi his success to the deception of Erica who in turn deceives her husband, the Warlock to the deceived love of Rudolf, the whore to fostering drug addiction.

At first activity has a clear and purposive orientation; to recover the Kremlin letter as a play in a global struggle between two states, and by implication, two ideologies. But action becomes confused, its purpose obscured and the importance of the letter indefinite. The private nature of the Highwayman's outfit, the ambiguity of Bresnovitch's position, the very existence of the letter and its significance case in doubt, cloud the purpose of rival activities and reveal them as absurd; the world of the film and by extension the modern world is existentially cruel, characterized by individuals preying on one another, frustrated by contingent forces of whose existence they are unaware, producing sudden reversals, the preyed upon become the preying, the vulnerable strong. Rone escapes Bresnovitch's ambush and threatens him, Potkin returns to the Soviet Union and menaces the whole Tillinger operation, a dead man returns, avenges past treachery and betrays his relation and ally.

The final portrayal of confusion, terror and violence proceeding from Boone's initiation of the operation as an act of human revenge against Kosnov and crystallised in his murder is mitigated by its explanatory function; actions that previously seemed arbitrary and chaotic are shown to have been purposive, directed and controlled. Shocking juxtapositions of images of violence and harmony, affirmative heterosexual love with the prostitution of one of the partners. Siberian ice with warm interiors, settle down and the stability and integration implied by early long takes is re-established after the death of Kosnov. Rone and B.A. are re-united by an avuncular Richard Boone. But finally the tentatively established harmony is undercut, Huston's vision of a cruel and senseless universe re-affirmed, love and union remain transitory and a world of terror and sadism re-established as the camera inexorably tracks in onto Rone's sentence - to kill the innocent Potkin family - the scene dominated by the augmenting whine of a jet aeroplane, the final voice drowning all other sensory impressions, a mindless, wordless scream of the lost.

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REALISM: THEORY & PRACTICE

RIO LOBO

RIO LOBO (USA., 1970) dir.: Howard Hawks, scr.: Leigh Bracket, Burton Wohl, sec. unit: Yakima Canutt, photo.: William Clothier, col.: Technicolor, mus.: J. Goldsmith; John Wayne (Cord McNally), Jorge Rivero (Pierre Cordona), Jennifer O'Neill (Shasta), Jack Elam (Phillips), Victor French (Ketcham), Chris Mitchum (Tuscarora)

Cord McNally (John Wayne), when asked what he's so happy about, at the campsite between Blackthorne and Rio Lobo: "Well, I've had about the right number of drinks, an' I'm warm, an' I'm relaxed. Well, if you gentle people can manage without me, I shall go to sleep."

RIO LOBO could be the epitaph of Hawks. Hawks who's still "having fun" with films in his mid-seventies. Hawks who, even more than in *EL DORADO*, has made at once a standard Western adhering to the strictures of the genre and an all-pervading abstraction that makes peace with his past films and with an embracing old age. Hawks who perhaps only now, in a wise aged dream-time, can measure up to Missiaen's praise and "have no imitators, only disciples." (1)

In *RED RIVER*, Dunson (John Wayne) is greatly at conflict with the environment, and the dramatic force of the film centres around his attempts to control it - since characters fill the foreground and the environment the background, much of the aesthetic force of the film is the interplay of fore- and background, and their perceptual relationship. In *RIO LOBO* the environment is almost completely under control. There are numerous instances of what I mean: for instance, "hostile" hornets and trees are harnessed to serve the Confederate hijacking; a great deal is made of Tuscarora's concealment underwater with his self-styled breathing tube - nature is "friendly"; and where natural forces might get the upper hand, a joke is made of it - Phillips devilishly says he hopes there are no rocks on their route to the jail with Ketcham, because they might cause his horse to trip and his gun to go off. My point, however, is that there is a visual correlate of this lack of conflict with the environment and this is an intermingling of the foreground and background.

Of Hawks' Westerns, *THE BIG SKY* and *RIO BRAVO* exhibit the visual clash in dimensions that characterized *RED RIVER* - but *RIO LOBO* (and *EL DORADO*) is stylistically apart, and if this can be explained in terms of themes as well as frames then we may begin to understand more deeply why the film is so good. More generally, there is a polemical aspect here, and it is that Hawks' critics (both admirers and detractors) have, to my mind, so far expressed the Hawks "world-view" in very minimal terms (2), rattling off the implications of the scripts and their embodied themes, his "world" if y like, but blinding themselves to his "view", his way of seeing, his visual style. To discuss visual style in Hawks is especially difficult since he's been hitherto dismissed as an unobtrusive "just-so" camera-eye (3).

What do I mean by a mixing of the foreground and background? Hawks' compositional sense is remarkably unformalistic and non-geometrical, there are few pretty composed shots and elaborately framed set-ups - *RIO LOBO* uses a screen-size of 1 to 1.85; cinemascope is anathema to Hawks. Yet his frames are full of tensions caused by areas of light and dark, of depth and flatness, of nearness and farness, of sparsity and crowding. His films are, in a sense, fights for lightness, flatness and so on, where film qualities like colour or texture are pushing and straining with each other. *RIO LOBO*, however, is all merger, all flux, no particular visual aspect ever really asserts or controls.

The first three or four shots of the film, for instance, showing the arrival of the train, then the nature of the Union soldiers' business, these shots have tensions between foreground and background which are neutralized almost as soon as they're noticed (by movements within the frame, like the train coming towards the surface of the screen, or the gold carried from front to back of the available screen-space; and by camera movements which draw the eye across a depth of field, like the draw-back from wagon to telegraphist's office). During the train hold-up, switches between subjective and objective points of view which amount to camera on or off the train, are in a sense

John Wayne ▼

switches between foreground and background, and the train's final collision is shot from alarmingly flat undimensional standpoints. During Col. McNally's almost mathematically precise separation from his troop, the soldiers go off of the screen in several different directions, uphill, downhill, east, west, upstream, downstream and McNally never commands our absolute attention at the visual centre of the frames - he's back of the screen, then somewhere near its surface, and when he finally finds himself alone, in a dappled stream, he heads directly away from the camera, not towards it.

Now I have a problem of interpretation here since all these aspects of the merging idea I've taken from the first part of the film - the Civil War sequences - which may have been done by the second-unit under Yakima Canutt. I don't know. But I submit that the rest of the film actually follows the same merging principles, though, of course, things get increasingly more complex till a sort of abstraction of chaos is attained. The important point is that it's not the chaos of a day-dream, of an ageing adventurer full of corn-oil, if you like! More instances of merging, chosen somewhat randomly, all add strength to my argument. In the Confederate cave hide-out and in the Sheriff's office in Blackthorne, the camera looks from a darker interior to brighter exterior - in both cases the visual strain of this dark-light opposition is "relaxed" by the respective appearances of Capt. Cordona on a horse and Shasta on the stage, then it is "lessened" by a mediating component of Wayne in both cases shuffling across the screen, and the whole visual experience is "smoothed out" with floating colours which drain the sequences of any tensions they might have seemed to have had - with browns in the hide-out, and pinks in the office. (In Hawks, colour is used in an interesting way, most often to cancel out certain visual tensions, and to vitiate easy identifications.)

There are very few 'close' close-ups in *RIO LOBO*, so the frame is often full of a number of people, and when this happens no compositional device puts any one at the centre of interest - one's eye can wander over the screen and not be relentlessly drawn to a particular person (of course, the demand of dialogue, plot, drama and characterization do lead the eye somewhere, but in spatial terms this is not necessarily so). Even the rooms themselves seem to enclose similar spaces, like the motel rooms of *RED LINE 7000*, so that both Maria's and Amelita's rooms, and to a lesser but still considerable extent also the Rio Lobo jail, Phillips' place, Dr. Ivor Jones', Ketcham's and the cantina, all mingle in our minds, there being nothing particularly striking in the props of each. Since there is a constant to and fro of people all entering and leaving, there is an unstable weightlessness to the characters. And *RIO LOBO*, more than *EL DORADO*, is a film made up of shadows and encroaching darkness - the following episodes are taking place at night: cat-and-mouse between Union colonel and Confederate captain and sergeant; the campfire between Blackthorne and Rio Lobo; arrival at Rio Lobo; Doc Prior's place, Ketcham's ranch and all the succeeding action till sun-up - in all about half the film.

Now, there are at least two major types of darkness in Hawks - a flat icy sheet of blackness which makes the foreground figures seem like cut-outs; and a foggier blackness which licks at the edges of people and objects. Neither usage is exclusive of the her, but the viewer will notice, for instance, the difference of visual impact between the shots of Pierre Cordona at the campsite between Blackthorne and Rio Lobo, and the sequence outside Doc Prior's - the first is like a stencil, the second is all murkiness. Since Hawks' frames are so self-contained, I find it wrong to relate darkness to a fatalism (as one might with Lang) or any other metaphysical idea; rather, it is an abstraction of a psychological sort - an instability, a state of potential collapse. The flat usage of blackness is subject to collapse because one senses the cut-out figure could just fall through the dark board; the rounded usage of blackness eliminates recognition of foreground and background by denying any middle area between the two. In both cases, darkness isn't the Shadow of Death, but an aspect of the merging principle which links nearly every shot of the film. I say nearly because there are a few shots which I can't see fitting into the pattern I've outlined. Consider the shot of horses galloping from Rocky Ford along by the railway: for a second or two, the frame encloses the space under the horses' bellies and between their legs. This strange, intrusive insert is unexplainable except in terms of either the demands of action and excitement or the "prediction" of Lt. Forsythe's broken neck.

Another isolated shot that seems at first sight not to lead to a merging is the declaration that war is over, in the prison-camp. It is not there just to hurry the plot along - there is a clap of thunder, and it is raining heavily, and rain is what makes the shot so evocative - rain is a kind of total "mixer" unifying everything, merging the small and personal (Capt. Cordona says "Damn, all this for nothing!") with a large and historical event (the Clarion headline reads . **WAR IS OVER**).

What I have done so far, in an imprecise manner, is describe some features of what I take to be the visual style of *RIO LOBO*. These features cannot begin to work on our consciousness, cannot have meaning, without reference to the more obvious activity of the film - what's in the script, how the narrative develops, story structure, characterization and acting, all the thematic preoccupations and so on - but In Hawks this relationship between style and content isn't direct. Hawks is an intuitive, unpretentious film-maker. Filming is a job to be done and enjoyed, actors may extemporize, the emphasis is on a naturalness with no room for hysteria. His style, then, is neither consciously rhetorical nor consciously interpretative, but the accumulative figurative choices he makes when setting up each shot are as much at the behest of an over-riding psychological state as they are of the script, the genre, and so on. It's as if the abstraction is unconsciously reached, in spite of the material.

The current auteur concept of Hawks is really quite primitive when you think about it, though I respect that its "You Tarzan, me Jane" method has a charming simplicity. I know there are going to be forthcoming essays on his gargling with incidents and references to his earlier films (witness the bay and sorrel in Abilene which McNally and Cordona conjure up; and Shasta's saloon-girl past etc.), essays on his sensibility with the western form, essays on Hawks themes as they reappear in *RIO LOBO* - on self respect, the search for identity, group membership and desertions, attitude to history, professionalism, and so on. But the real subject, the underlying concern, and the theme which "factorizes" the other themes, is age, in all its ramifications, in questions of maturity, of wisdom, of dignity, and by comparison with youth. In *RIO LOBO* Hawks does not sentimentalize nor remonstrate about his ageing, or about the ageing process in general; he gives us a self-contained psychological description without larger implications than the conditions of its own poetry.

People in Hawks are seldom related, one doesn't get the impression that the family means much to him. Instead, experience makes the Hawks hero into a potential father-figure. Col. Cord McNally tells his "son", lt. Forsythe, after the young Union soldier jumps from the train - "Ned, your neck's broken". Ned dies two days later, and Cord takes his valedictory words seriously - "Catch 'em, will you?" - so that revenge becomes the dramatic impetus behind the whole of the film. But there is a little ambiguity here, in the relation of the Col. to the Lt.: McNally only mentioned the importance of Forsythe to him twice, the first time when he says he's been with him "since the war began" and the second time when he explains to Cordona and Tuscarora that "a boy I watched grow up" was killed in the robbery they'd perpetrated. The implication is either that McNally had actually brought the young man up, or that it was the war experience which had matured him under McNally's apprenticeship. And when the war is over, McNally is at pains to assure the released Confederates that what they'd done was "an act of war", whereas the "selling of information" by two traitors who'd tipped the other side off about gold shipments was "treason - rotten treachery for money". In other words, wrapped up with any personal motivations which McNally has for revenge, there is the rationale that to betray the group is wrong and impeachable. It transpires that the chief culprit, Sgt. Major Ike Gorman (Ketcham), is shot down by the Rio Lobo sheriff, for just the same motives - that he'd betrayed the group by selling off their assets to save his own skin.

Throughout the film a private responsibility to one's self-respect is never quite distinguished from a public responsibility to the group. This collusion can be seen in the dramatic devices of the plot, wherein McNally can eke out personal revenge and at the same time let the inhabitants of Rio Lobo have their town back; wherein the townsfolk who rise up to the "miracle" of ridding themselves of the crooked gang do so as much out of self-interest as duty and solidarity ("They won't be much help unless they're real good."); and wherein McNally and Phillips achieve a "joking relationship" more through the identification of old men who've watched their "sons" grow up than other loyalties ("Us civilians ain't the fools you Yankees think.")

In the film's avoidance of a strict moral conclusion, Amelita seeks assurances of her "right to kill" the sheriff who'd disfigured her but McNally only recognizes that "someone else would have", harping back to his own motives when he's stressed that she'd have to beat him to it. So, just as ontologically there's a disordered flux of all visual components, so dramatically there's a lack of resolution of conflicts. Individuals, their desires and actions, are judged by their need to make a mark, to assert themselves, on an unpredictable world. In this search for identity, they merge with, are emasculated by their environment. Foreground and background merge.

This "vision" could easily be a hard nihilistic one were it not for the blend of crazy relief Hawks gives to *RIO LOBO*, in his attitudes to ageing and death. McNally is "baby whale" whom Tuscarora could have kissed and whom Shasta finds "comfortable" - he yells "OUCH!" when he's shot in the leg, and he lumbers through a series of gun - and fist-fights. He likes his drink, and in Phillips' shack he finds a bottle that's "not for the young". He jibes Cordona for his youthful chivalry, he can share the irony of Sheriff Cronin who hurts his shoulder when he falls to the floor firing in the Blackthorne bar, and he is consecutively cheated of revenge on Whitey (by Shasta), Ketcham (by Hendricks) and Hendricks (by Amelita). With a few drinks he's warm and relaxed.

Phillips, however, is anything but relaxed, his gestures are gesticulations, his eyes roll, his neck twitches - Jack Elam has rarely given a finer caricature. He is crazy, but eccentric rather than senile, and only really infantile when he plays his jew's harp to annoy others into getting him a drink, like a spoilt child. His maniacal humour is directed to two ends - to poking fun at the group ("You coming with us?", and other jokes he has at the expense of McNally's leadership - "Glad I brought you along, eh?") and to poking fun at death. He shoots at strangers on sight, and all the verbal humour which is directed against Ketcham is in the final analysis connected with his **lack of control** over his thumb on the cocked double-barrelled shot-gun - death comes from not being in control of the environment.

Only to Shasta is death a frightening threat, when she faints at the thought that she's killed Whitey, and when she realizes she's sleeping on the site of an Indian pyre. For Hawks heroes, death is just a fact, after it you count the bodies and the undertaker is there to rub his hands. If anywhere, the dead are "at another gate now, looking for St. Peter", they can be joked about.

Unlike *EL DORADO*, which concentrates on the physical deterioration of ageing, and a violence and pain that suggest despair, *RIO LOBO* is suffused with a more stoical psychological state, a way of seeing which is an abstraction of the thematic sub-stratum. Wollen seems to think that the adventure dramas and the crazy comedies are discrete groups of films in the Hawks oeuvre (4). We should not be thinking in terms of the abacus, but the slide-rule: what are the visual correlates of this tension in **each** film? *RIO LOBO* works because the tension of men controlling the environment which is the central conflict of the adventure drama, and of environment controlling the men which is the central conflict of the crazy comedies, is visually conveyed **in both cases** by the merging process I outlined earlier. The way to encompass both conflicts is to have them merge, and in more senses than one, the film is a **realization** of ambiguity and chaos as facts of life. *RIO LOBO* achieves a state of grace, neatly epitomized in the credit shots of a serenely picked guitar.

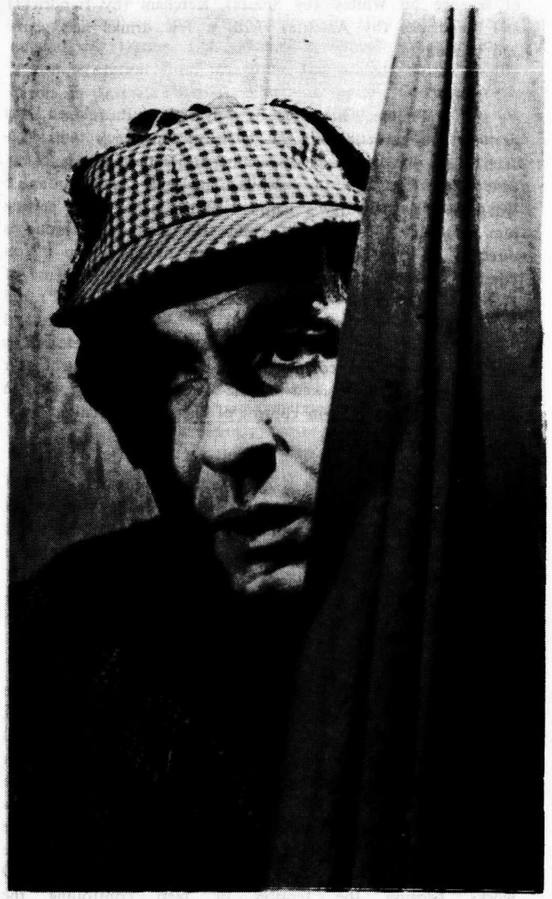
Mike WALLINGTON

1. *Howard Hawks* by J.C. Missiaen, Classiques du Cinéma no.21, p.167, lines 10-11, Editions Universitaires 1966.

2. For an intelligent, but slimly documented rebuttal of Wood, see Alan Lovell's excellent papers in *Screen* Vol.II No. 4/5 pp.76-88 (The Common Pursuit of True Judgement)

3. There are other problems connected with any visual analysis of film, e.g. the "intentionality argument" (which the surrealists scotched 40 years ago) and the fact that we see a slightly different film from our fellow critics.

4. *Signs and Meanings in the Cinema* by Peter Wollen, Secker & Warburg 1969 pp.93-4.



the private life of Sherlock Holmes

THE PRIVATE LIFE OF SHERLOCK HOLMES may possibly be Wilder's finest movie; the achievements that it represents is all the more remarkable because emanating from a director who seemed to have gone down, thrashing futilely, in the flux of the sixties. The metamorphosis is however, in the nature of the cinema, not in the personality; the hysteric and insidious nihilism has been transmuted into a noble scepticism, in which the folly of the world is proportionate, and a capacity for good revealed. The response which *SHERLOCK HOLMES* elicits, far from the stifling nullity experienced in *THE APARTMENT*, or *ONE, TWO, THREE* is heightened because its origin is deeply embedded in the organic nature of the movie. The world-view that it expresses arises from the conflict between the individual and forces which represent an encroaching dispossession of individuality, but the dialectic is from *within*; it arises from the relation of character and environment rather than the imposed personality of the director which starkly dominates every frame of a movie such as *ONE, TWO, THREE*. "Nobody's perfect"; that recurrent theme of Wilder has achieved a heightened resonance through the inception of the moral representation into the mise-en-scene.

The movie commences with the opening of the bank-vault in which has been stored, for posterity, the familiar collection of objects which symbolize the legendary detective; the deer-stalker, the pipe, the syringe. But Wilder intends a double perspective on these things; their nostalgic value is accompanied by a feeling that they represent the totality of Holmes' existence, to which the individual has become reduced. The sentiment is reinforced by the extraordinary symbol which embodies the stultifying existence of 221B Baker Street; the wheezing skeletonic contraption that inhales and exhales cigarette smoke for the purposes of a futile experiment that Holmes is conducting concerning the individual natures of various kinds of ash, in order to pass the time.

Wilder's concentration on the object is related to the theme of appearance and reality that permeates the movie. It is Holmes' confusion in the area of the value of appearances that precipitates the acid conclusion. The superb example of this is the set of Baker Street itself which, with its evocation of the fog-bound world of Victorian London, is perfectly manufactured; its prime virtue is its deliberately nostalgic quality. Similarly, the Diogenes Club, with its dormant, stagnant facade, which occupied such a peripheral position in the original stories, has, in the universe of Wilder, become the centre of the machinations of the British Secret Service, presided over by Holmes' sinister brother Mycroft. Four diminutive figures dressed in schoolboy clothes are in fact middle-aged dwarfs. The group of Trappist monks that travel up to Scotland on the train with Holmes and Watson are German agents. The Inverness castle undergoing reconstruction for reasons of preservation is a submarine base. The mythical Loch Ness monster is none other than a prototype submarine, being tested by the British. In one of the opening scenes, which takes place during a performance of "Swan Lake" in the Covent Garden opera house, the fatuous Dr. Watson (Colin Blakely), has insistently repeated to an extremely bored Holmes, (Robert Stephens), that the swan gliding across the back of the stage is, in fact, a model. But it is Holmes' blindness to the ambiguity of appearances that will render him, at the end of the movie, utterly helpless and static; his insistence on free agency only further implicates him in a situation well beyond his control.

It is the detective's infatuation with the female German spy masquerading as Gabrielle Valladon that determines his decision to continue with the case despite the threatening disapprobation of Mycroft. With typical Wilderian irony, the symbol of her gentility, her delicate parasol, is equivocal in as far as it is the instrument that she employs to send coded messages to her fellow agents. It also becomes the symbol of her deceptive professionalism, equating with the familiar iconographical features of Holmes' existence; Wilder shows this in her final scene when, escorted away from Holmes and Watson by Mycroft and the police, who have realized her treachery all along, she manages to transmit a last 'au revoir' to the detective as the carriage disappears through a wood in the distance. At last, the meaning of the objects which surround Holmes, in relation to his individual, emotional life becomes clear; it is his professional capacities which have stunted him. Because of his professional mistrust, he has erected a barrier of frigidity around him; the first time that this is lowered results in a true deception. With the delicate irony of the final parting, Wilder manages to convey the loss implicit in the departure, the rupture of a potential relationship.

From the opening scene, Wilder demonstrates how far Holmes' relationship with Gabrielle is connected with Time; her daguerreotype is shown to be placed inside his watch when it is removed from the vault. The consequences of the relationship demonstrate Holmes' inability to seize the time, to live out the individual moments of his life to their true conclusion. Ultimately, Gabrielle's exposure over, Holmes must play out his charade to the end.

The whole trajectory of the movie can be seen as an attempt to lure Holmes out from his attitude of eremetic professionalism. In the scenes in 221B Baker Street, the camera is almost always situated in the communal sitting-room; it never once enters Holmes' own room, and the audience only glimpses occasionally the mysterious interior. Finally, Holmes returns to his solitude and his cocaine, after hearing of Gabrielle's execution overseas, and Watson, powerless to prevent this retreat, returns to the fatuous mythicizing of his friend in his journal. What distinguishes Wilder's movie in the treatment of the main theme is that the sense of disalignment between free agency and the play of exterior forces is created wholly from the organic mise-en-scene, rather than the over-bearing presence of a preconceived attitude which many of the director's previous films have exemplified. In the sequences where Holmes, Gabrielle and Watson bicycle from one Scottish castle to another, Wilder makes excellent use of the large zoom-lens, homing in deliberately on the moving figures, as if they were being observed by a malign presence, which indeed they are. Ultimately for Wilder, characters who attempt to determine their own fates are tricked; their freedom is only a more insidious repression. But, in *SHERLOCK HOLMES*, he views their attempts with a delicate and noble irony, that arises as a result of a genuine engagement with the material of the film itself. It is the genuine engagement that breeds a deeper response on the behalf of the audience.

Peter LLOYD

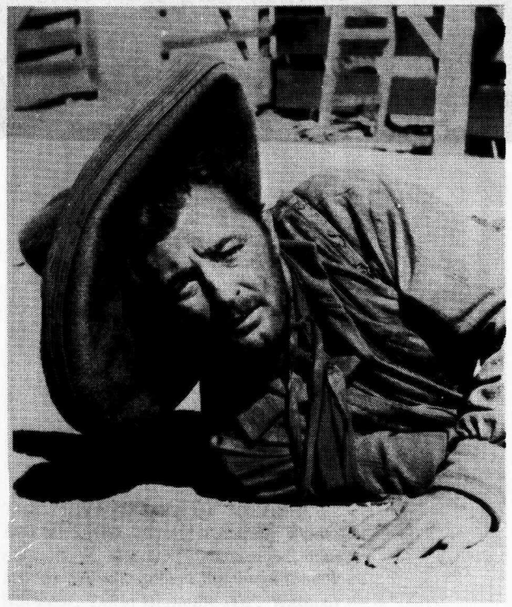
Genevieve Page Robert Stephens

THE PRIVATE LIFE OF SHERLOCK HOLMES (GB, 1970) dir.: Billy Wilder, scr.: B.W. and I.A.L. Diamond, mus.: Miklos Rosza; Robert Stephens (Sherlock Holmes), Colin Blakeley (Dr. Watson), Genevieve Page (Gabrielle Valladon), Christopher Lee (Mycroft Holmes)

Wonderful Country

A highly personal American director whose work reveals social conditioning as a focal point of thematic unity, Robert Parrish's subjects are human alienation and national identity. His attitude towards them, his personal vision of life, and the way this generates his style and technique are shown beautifully in *THE WONDERFUL COUNTRY* but also *CRY DANGER* (1951), *THE PURPLE PLAIN* (1955) and *IN THE FRENCH STYLE* (1963). Parrish's protagonists have repudiated their own sources, cut themselves off from their family, society or inheritance. In a painful, agonized existence of intolerable isolation, sexual unhappiness, sordidness, and violence, their individual identity and meaning of existence are obscured. The hero's ultimate acceptance of his social heritage, therein finding his true identity, peace within himself and integration in society has a general significance. The plight of the Parrish hero is that he is a prisoner of his national heritage.

The hero of *THE WONDERFUL COUNTRY*, Martin Brady (Robert Mitchum), a renegade and killer with all the physical characteristics of a Mexican, is seen at the very beginning of the film crossing the Rio Grande and returning to his native country, the U.S., to buy contraband arms in Texas (many years earlier Brady had defected to Mexico after killing his father's murderer). Embodied in the ambiguity of Brady's identity is Parrish's conviction that personal identity is essentially linked to national or racial attributes. The only course for Brady is the restoration of his American citizenship, and in the end, he comes to a definite acceptance of his national identity, turning away in repugnance from Mexico and regarding himself finally as an American. Each crossing of the U.S.-Mexican border marks a different stage in process of Brady discovering his own nature. The opening sequence shows him returning to the U.S., the pull of his ruthlessly suppressed identity still strong inside him even though he has lived in Mexico for most of his life and regards himself as a Mexican. Later, Brady must run again, as a result of an involuntary killing, the consequence of his past way of life, and again his only haven is the Mexican side of the Rio Grande. Re-entering Mexico, he is torn by the full and anguished extent of his conflicts over on the one hand, his 'lost' American identity and a return to that of an alien race, Mexico, and on the other, his regained freedom. The mood of the opening scenes is one of alienation and inner despair with Brady not holding any hope of finding a place in the society he is revisiting. The film ends of a note of American idealisation, redemption and reconciliation, his country rescuing Brady from his plight.



Robert Mitchum

The hero's moral regeneration, his national consciousness and eventual adjustment to American life is stimulated by his falling in love with Julie London's independent-minded, sensuous and solumn Ellen Colton. Her love for Brady is perfectly consistent with the sense that they are both in different ways exiles. She is married to an army officer, estranged from her husband, childless, despising the circumstances of army life and her physical surroundings. Brady's love for Ellen forces a self-awareness that eventually results in him relinquishing the values he has lived by, converting to her ideals and needs, the climax of the film.

To go back to the beginning, which in itself is very elegiac and sardonic, as Brady rides down the main street of El Puerto, a small adobe brick Texas border town, his horse is thrown by a tumbleweed and Brady breaks a leg. Gradually, he is absorbed into American life during his convalescence, falling in love and forming personal relationships of lesser importance, until he becomes the spectre of the person he would have been if he hadn't fled to Mexico. But Brady's is neither an instantaneous nor a total abandonment of his Mexican allegiance.

Before his dual loyalties are reconciled, in self-defence Brady kills the man who has murdered a helpless friend, and flees back across the Rio Grande. The Mexican border is a vital feature of the film, establishing one of Parrish's major themes: the deep and fundamental ideological differences between nations. *THE WONDERFUL COUNTRY* begins and ends with Brady crossing the border to America, the Rio Grande therein providing a symmetrical pattern within the film, being a metaphor for the disintegrative forces within Brady himself, existing indeed in symbolic relation to him.

On his return to Mexico, which forms the physical and social background for the remainder of the film, Brady is entangled in the struggle for power between his master Governor Castro and the governor's brother General Castro, Brady becoming increasingly out of sympathy with their political corruption. Governor Castro is very indignant at Brady's Gringo appearance and holds him responsible for the loss of the gun shipment. Back in the governor's service as gunman and bodyguard, Brady is virtually a prisoner, torn between his Mexican personation and his reviviscent American impulses.

Brady and Ellen meet again at the fiesta at Chinora celebrating the forthcoming joint U.S.-Mexican military action against the Apaches. But Ellen rejects him so long as he upholds violence, the gun being the primary attachment in his life and a symbol of the values that keep them apart. When he disobeys an order to murder General Castro, Brady finds himself finally trapped by the confusions in the way he lives, an outcast, a fugitive in Mexico as well as the U.S., the conflicts within him coming to a head.

The last episode presents Brady, drifting in almost total isolation, being harassed by the Mexican and American authorities. He eventually encounters Major Colton who is fatally wounded by the Apaches. As a result of these circumstances Brady decides to return to the U.S. Major Colton dies on the journey. After a battle against the Apaches, and a final showdown, Brady is forced to shoot his thorough-bred stallion (named Lagrimas which means tears in Spanish), a gift from the Castros' which represents his last remaining tie with Mexico. In the very last shot he lays down his gun and returns morally regenerated, to Ellen Colton and a wholly fresh start in the U.S.: the hero's final redemption opening the way to the restoration of his American citizenship and to future happiness.

The whole tone of isolation, alienation and misery of Brady and Ellen's past, and the brilliantly sharp colour photography and design spring from Robert Parrish's dispassionate observation of his characters. We are at all time outside Brady, as much as we are in Kelly, the prostitute heroine of *THE NAKED KISS*, Samuel Fuller's stark, reproachful and entirely opposing interpretation of the same basic theme of American identity. At all times Brady is distanced; viewed living in relation to two cultures at eternal enmity with the other, and treated with Parrish's characteristic objectivity, seriousness and dignity.

Andrew MILNE

THE WONDERFUL COUNTRY (USA, 1959) dir.: Robert Parrish, scr.: Robert Ardrey, from a novel by Tom Lea, phot.: Floyd Crosby Alex Philipps, col.: Technicolor, mus.: Alex North; Robert Mitchum (Martin Brady), Julie London (Ellen Colton), Gary Merrill (Major Colton), Pedro Armendariz (Cipriano Castro), Charles McGraw (Doc Stovall)

Joel McCrea in Robert Parrish's SAN FRANCISCO STORY

EISENSTEIN

STYLE IN IVAN THE TERRIBLE

Since there seems to be some vague consensus over Eisenstein: which is that, within the body of his work, the earlier work is to be preferred over the later and, if anything, Part I of *IVAN THE TERRIBLE* over Part II, let me begin this review by stating, as an opinion which I will try to substantiate, that Eisenstein's great achievement in the cinema is precisely in *IVAN* and above all in the second part, *THE BOYAR'S PLOT.*

True, *IVAN THE TERRIBLE* is not a very inviting work - but congeniality does not constitute a touchstone of artistic merit. If *IVAN* offends and disconcerts, Lichtenberg's aphorism has a certain appositeness - "When a book and a head collide, and there is a hollow sound, is it always the fault of the book?"

Eisenstein's sin in this work is that he supplies things which an audience has not asked for and fails to provide a number of things which they feel they have a right to expect. *IVAN THE TERRIBLE* offends against naturalistic criteria by its quite extraordinary degree of stylisation, in the costumes, sets, style of acting, editing and yet it does not "validate" itself by utilising this stylisation to convey symbolic meanings but appears to employ these expressive devices purely for their own sake. In fact, rapidly surveying Eisenstein's career as a whole it would be easy to conclude that his commitment to an agit-prop revolutionary cinema was superficial and that his deepest loyalties were to ritual and traditon - the religious ceremonies in *OLD AND NEW,* for example, are undeniably impressive despite the fact that they constitute the principal target of social criticism. Even here, of course, there need not be a contradiction: we may say that Eisenstein's greatness lies in the fact that he can at once show this impressiveness and at the same time expose its mystifying role, that it is impossible to do the one without doing the other. But there nevertheless does remain a puzzle in the whole pattern of Eisensteins's development, which appears as a daunting mixture of consistency and contradictoriness. Is it Eisenstein's theory that is consistent, his practise that is contradictory or vice versa? The difficulty in answering this question resides in the

"What film really demands is external action and not introspective psychology"

Brecht

"A theatre built on psychological foundations is as certain to collapse as a house built on sand. On the other hand, a theatre which relies on physical elements is at very least assured of clarity."

Meyerhold

"Wherever there is art, there too is stylisation."

V. Bryusov

"The scenic picture, as in any great art, must be very schematic."

Enrico Corradini, praising Appia's **Tristan and Isolde**

"To 'stylise' a given period or phenomenon means to employ every possible means of expression in order to reveal the inner synthesis of that period or phenomenon."

Meyerhold

fact that there are too many variables. With Brecht, for example, it is possible to relate a clear-cut theory to a well-defined method of theatrical production and to posit a distinction between text and performance, but with Eisenstein, to use an appropriately cinematic word, even these certainties dissolve.

Undoubtedly Eisenstein went through periods where he ran into some kind of an impasse and seemed unable to resolve the problems he had created for himself - but far from discrediting him we surely should admire him for his courage. For we ought to recognise both that they were resolved and that they were posed on a far higher level than the criticism that purports to deal with them - as though the problems of *Capital* Vol. III could be highlighted from the perspective of Adam Smith. Eisenstein is judged against a series of interlocking presuppositions of bourgeois culture, which he along with just about every creative figure in the poetry, music, painting, theatre and cinema of the early twentieth century, quite explicitly rejected. Even if we think this rejection wrong or misconceived we ought at least to make the effort to understand the reasons behind it.

The montage of quotations at the head of this review is designed to pre-empt characteristic reactions to *IVAN THE TERRIBLE* by showing not only how widespread was the support for procedures of this kind in the reaction against bourgeois naturalism but also to indicate that for them the methods we find alien were taken to be absolutely characteristic of all great art. But, as we all know, by a great irony, bourgeois naturalism became socialist realism, and Lukacs unites with Western critics in accepting 19th century fiction as constituting an artistic norm, just at the moment when it was precisely that normativeness that was being called in question. For bourgeois literature and bourgeois criticism was reductionist: on the one hand it predicated the universal tragedy of bankruptcy, on the other it rejected everything that did not fall within its purview (the Shakespeare criticism of E.E. Stoll) as ridiculous and improbable. For its opponents, the pretensions of this outlook to universality were as absurd as Hegel's

rationalisation of the Prussian state. Thus the search for the modern is invariably linked with a deliberate regression to more primitive forms, which are more universal just because they are not characterised by realist/illusionist assumptions or by a copious, undiscriminating specificity. It is not simply a matter of different styles but of a whole new outlook, with political, philosophical, aesthetic and psychological implications. The table below indicates some of these differences.

19th C	20thC
unself-conscious-ness of work of art	self-conscious-ness of work of art
organism	mechanism
co-ordination / integration	conflict / separation
content determines form	form determines content
natural	arbitrary
illusion	style
subjective world	objective world
specificity - movement from particular to general	universality - movement from general to particular
empiricism	gestalt theory

Obviously, a table of this kind is necessarily schematic and needless to say, the fact that theoretical questions are posed in a certain way is not to be taken as an indication that that way is correct - on the contrary - only that this terminology may be fruitful in distinguishing between, say, Stravinsky and Mahler, Stanislavsky and Meyerhold, Joyce and George Eliot, Pirandello and Ibsen, Picasso and Constable, Eisenstein and .... well, Bazin.

For clearly Bazin still represents the principal source of opposition to the cinema of Eisenstein. As it happens, I believe that there is a certain element of truth in Renoir's criticisms of montage and that Eisenstein, quite independently arrived at similar conclusions. However, Bazin is the kind of critic whose intuitions are often better than their logic - he knows that something is wrong but cannot quite put his finger on it. For his actual remarks are ill-grounded and incorrectly formulated. Bazin has essentially three objections to montage, though in the end they all come to much the same thing:

(1) it does violence to reality

(2) the images cease to have any inherent meaning, because their meaning is determined by the relationship between them. They lose their ambiguity

(3) the images tend to become symbolic and abstract.

Here, at once, we see Bazin's problems as a critic. For him the Art/Reality confusion is not a question to be resolved but a basic assumption: hence he is unable to formulate any conception of art at all. Secondly, his thinking is dominated by what I will call "the intrinsic fallacy" - that is, the tendency to assume that **all** the characteristics of a given phenomenon are intrinsic, and a consequent inability to distinguish between those aspects that are genuinely specific and those which are accidental or contingent (this, by the way, is a fundamental characteristic of bourgeois thought). Thus, Bazin assumes that all images have an intrinsic meaning and rejects all attempts on the part of the director to manipulate him, yet reserves for the spectator the right to come to any conclusions he likes about what he sees on the screen. How can the images have an intrinsic meaning and at the same time mean anything? These conundrums can only be disposed of by making the necessary assumption.

(a) that the director does indeed determine the significance of what we see.

(b) that the notion of inherent or intrinsic meaning serves no purpose since it is self-contradictory and, if taken, seriously, leaves neither artist nor spectator with any role.

Bazin defends "ambiguity" against the tyrannical artist (though its place in his scheme of things is not at all clear). He wishes to preserve ambiguity of meaning, in the sense not so much of "more than one meaning" as of "any meaning", yet he resents ambiguity in the status of the image which is introduced by the principle of montage. At bottom what Bazin recognises very clearly in the silent cinema, and therefore refuses to acknowledge, is that the image, as image, necessarily has referential, representative, metaphorical and symbolic connotations. But Bazin, by burying his head in the sand, will deny this.

All the same, Bazin has a point - though it is a point not so much about montage as about the silent cinema in general - which is that the silent cinema functioned on an excessively high level of generality and abstraction (Chaplin is the great exception). But Bazin again posits this as intrinsic to montage, when it only happens to be part of a larger problematic of which the use of montage is also a part. Clearly there are other factors involved.

The silent cinema was trying to reach an international mass audience, that was not always highly educated, and it had therefore to concentrate on communicating universal human feelings, - love, hate, fear, hope, despair, joy, sorrow - stripped as far as possible of particular distinctions of time, place and circumstance. If it was, in some sense, a proletarian cinema it was very little of a Marxist one. Human attitudes were everything, material circumstances nothing. In the Soviet Union these tendencies were reinforced by a sense of the universal message of the Russian Revolution and of the universality of the human condition (under capitalism, oppression or domination), by an emphasis on the masses over the individual. The way in which tendencies towards symbolisation and representativeness are linked with a concern for universality, and expressed through a movement from the general to the particular is exemplified in *THE BATTLESHIP POTEMKIN.*

Everything about Eisenstein's construction of the Odessa Steps sequence arises out of his determination to give it a higher representativeness, a general significance. Thus, in reaction against bourgeois art, we return to the familiar distinction between the brazen world of reality and the golden world of art. Neither the Odessa steps themselves or

the pram are symbols - but, since the massacre did not actually occur there but elsewhere, they are expressive devices used by Eisenstein to intensify the meaning of the scene. Thus, it would be perfectly true to say of this sequence that it does not portray a reality at all but shows, as a simulacrum, in a formal way, the conflict between the forces of law and order and the people, between violence and helplessness. The formal rigidity of the movement of the soldiers down the steps is contrasted with the discontinuous haphazard progress of the pram. And Eisenstein chooses the individuals he shows for their representativeness. They stand for "the Russian people", for "motherhood" and so on. They are concrete universals and not universal particulars.

Is Eisenstein's procedure legitimate? There can be no simple answer to this question in general terms. All artistic methods have their risks. In bourgeois art the danger is that the specific will be endowed with a bogus universality, in Eisensteinian cinema that particular will become completely impoverished through its need to serve as a vehicle for further meanings. And it is certainly the case that with Eisenstein the problem of the particular and the general reached an acute form in *BEZHIN MEADOW* where the attempt to relate an individual story to a public theme only succeeded in degrading, vulgarising and melodramatising them both - on falling into both traps simultaneously.

Bazin, in this conjucture, would defend the integrity of the image by proposing a return to reality and the abandonment of stylisation, by asking that the director refrain from imposing an interpretation on the spectator by making the image infinitely suggestive. Eisenstein's solution is exactly the reverse: he defends the integrity of the image by **increasing** the level of stylisation and thereby making it less available, less malleable and adaptable to the interpretative fancies of the spectator. Through his formalisation, Eisenstein insists on the **quidditas** of the film as an aesthetic object - that it is **this** and not another thing. In *IVAN THE TERRIBLE* nothing is hinted at; everything is directly conveyed by formal methods.

In *IVAN THE TERRIBLE PART I,* Eisenstein gave the **Gesamtkunstwerk**, the "perfect fusion of all media of expression, in close mutual subordination" (Appia) a new meaning. In this work all artistic means are subordinated to a single end. As Eisenstein himself put it:

> "The grandeur of our subject called for monumental means of presentation. Details were pushed into the background and everything was subordinated to the principle idea of the might of Russia and the struggle to make it a great power."

The spectator is distanced from the action by means of stylisation (cf. Brecht and common interest in oriental theatre) - he is forced to recognise that the experience is alien and that he cannot easily draw lessons or conclusions from it. Prokofiev's music, of course, plays an important part and musical analogies are everywhere relevant. *IVAN PART I,* for example, recalls the programme of Liszt's *Les Preludes,* in which the conflicts, hesitations and tendencies towards pessimism in the hero are finally overcome in a triumphant conclusion, in which "the trumpet sounds the assault" and drives the hero into "the thick of the battle." This progression is repeated and amplified in *IVAN THE TERRIBLE.* The first phase leads up to the cry "to Kazan", the second to the conclusion of Part I, "We are going to Moscow." The third phase, Part II, has the same form, only in the mode of irony. Its meaning is qualitatively different.

It would be easy to denigrate the picture by describing Ivan as a Hamlet figure, but this is to misconstrue the nature of Eisenstein's concerns. For Eisenstein, Ivan, is a figure ahead of his time, and yet of it; his struggles arise out of his attempt to transcend the world and the preconceptions of the world in which he finds himself. Thus, Ivan's attitude towards the church is contradictory: on the one had belief in his own divine mission gives him confidence; on the other hand, the church, its alliance with the boyars; its mystifying role constitutes an obstacle to the realisation of his plans which he intuitively recognises. Ivan is a man determined to transform reality and to make use of new social forces to achieve that end. His goals are not purely subjective, but find reinforcement in the objective world, in the support of the people and of the "new men."

Gesture in *IVAN PART I* assumes great significance because it is a form of assertion, an act of definition and an act of will (the debate with the Kazan envoy). Eisenstein's theme is conveyed by compositional means: the disruptive role of the boyars and Euphrosyne is suggested by the asymmetry created by eyes looking directly into the camera at close range; the unity represented by Ivan (in some sense symbol of the Hegelian "idea") by making him the focal point of elaborate pictorial compositions. Ivan's struggle to master his world is shown through postures of submission and dominance within the frame, a progressive movement is created through the use of montage within elaborately extended episodes.

THE BOYARS' PLOT transcends and yet depends upon its predecessor for its interpretation. But there is no "meaning" to expressed only an action, employing certain formal procedures, certain symmetries, absences as well as presences. Part II only has significance insofar as it is checked against Part I. For one thing, there is a radical reorientation in the significance of gesture, which no longer expresses meaning but its absence. Ivor Montague asks "Why swallow the script and not its embodiment?" - yet even Stalinists could follow the significance of the mise-en-scene. For in Part II, the people are absent. What made Ivan different from those he was plotting against was his relationship with the people and when he says in Part I that the people support him we see them in their thousands. He says it again in Part II but we see no one. Ivan, and his "new men" have lost their larger social role and hence become equivalent to those they struggle against. If *IVAN I* is musical, *IVAN II* is theatrical and Ivan's fondness for gesture, ritual, theatricalism is exhibited as nihilism. Ivan's conflict with the world has ended in both victory and solipsism, nothing has reality or meaning for him except himself - and perhaps not even that. For Eisenstein's flashback to Ivan's childhood strongly suggests that in destroying Vladimir, Ivan is also destroying himself; in his maturity avenging himself in symbolic form on the innocence that made him vulnerable, Ivan becomes triumphant only at the price of ceasing to stand for anything.

The scene in the church in which Ivan vows to become "Ivan the Terrible" is perhaps the most remarkable episode in the whole history of the cinema: its complex interrelation of different levels provides the most convincing refutation of the aesthetics of Bazin. For Eisenstein shows how intimately related are "reality" and symbolisation - that reality not merely "is" but is also how we perceive it, or what stance we adopt towards it. The faces of Shadrach, Mishak and Abednego in the church have no referent, but are interpreted as having one by Euphorsyne who links their situation with hers and Ivan with Nebuchadnezzar. The analogy breaks down when the boy laughs and says "Is that the terrible heathen Tsar?" but this apparent relapse into the naturalistic level is immediately undercut as Ivan says "Henceforth I shall be such a person." Here human beings are shown in a dialectical relationship with their environment and not as "belonging" in a God-give natural world.

THE BOYARS' PLOT suggests two parallels: one between Ivan and Stalin, the other between Ivan and Christ. But there can be no question that Ivan is Stalin, the film remains true to itself and its own subject. But we can draw this conclusion if we wish. (There is no question either of inherent meaning or of ambiguity). The second parallel is indeed indicated within the continuity of the action. Kurbsky's kiss recalls the kiss of Judas and the final image in which Ivan on his throne and an innocent ikon of Christ clearly underlines the distinction between "goodness and mercy" and the worldly power that turns this phrase into a sham. But it is only right that the image should undercut Ivan's struggle to monopolise all value.

IVAN THE TERRIBLE then, is both an affirmation and a critique of gesture; it shows gesture as meaning and gesture as sham. The work's authenticity lies in its faithfulness to its own concerns; precisely in its not positing itself as a polysignificant reality-illusion, Eisenstein is the supreme validation of style in the cinema.

David MORSE

IVAN THE TERRIBLE Pt. II (THE BOYARS' PLOT) (USSR , 1946) dir.: Sergei M. Eisenstein, scr.: S. M. E., phot.: Andrei Moskvin (interiors) Eduard Tisse (exteriors), mus.: Sergei Prokofiev, lyr.: Vladimir Lugovsky; Nikolai Cherkasov (Ivan), Ludmila Tselikovskaya (Tsarina), Michail Nasvanov(Kurbsky) , Andrei Abrikosov (Kolychev, subsequently Abbot Philip)

book reviews

RAOUL WALSH by Michel Marmin

Cinéma d'Aujourd'hui No 63 Seghers Paris 1970

It is evidently a matter of publishers' policy that the Seghers series of monographs contains a large number of books whose authors disclaim critical intentions. Pierre Lherminier, the editor of the series, wrote the volume on Vigo and made it immediately clear that he was not writing criticism, but writing, rather, to express his affection for the films in question (the 'labour of love' aspects of the series often have useful results in fine research work which forms or accompanies the texts - the marvellous volume on Sennett is exemplary in this sense). One sees the aptness, in view of this, of employing the MacMahoniste writers, who habitually don't set out to provide analyses or frameworks for discrimination within a body of work, but instead to set up monuments to the directors they admire. Their magazine *Présence du Cinéma* consists of a series of such monuments, so imposing that one must come to terms with them before one can move on - and one must, I think, move on.

Michael Mourlet's book on de Mille in the Seghers series offers a *note liminaire* which makes clear some of the basic attitudes: the critic ought to convey, by the poetic use of language, the feeling aroused by the work in question; to take up one page is nevertheless better than to take up four, and it might even be better to say nothing; the accumulation of knowledge is worse than useless unless it has a function; criticism should be 'dynamic' leading the reader to make discoveries; most criticism is parasitical, and a work of art properly achieved needs no commentator; the work is what matters, and explication can only teach the apt but ignorant young; explication of themes is a waste of time; poor criticism is symptomatic of our period's lack of creative energy. Even if (as I do) one accepts the validity of much of this, the splendid gestures it gives rise to can still seem inadequate. My response to the Right as to the Left in much current 'criticism' is the same: if there is bad criticism one should have the nerve not to abandon the practice of criticism but rather to practice it better. Certainly the Left has, in effect, abdicated, producing no significant aids to discrimination and evaluation. Between the rhetoric of the Right and the paralysing, extreme rejection of rhetoric on the Left it should be possible to pursue a responsible and creative course.

Marmin presents Walsh in such a way that, he hopes, the impact of our own discovery of the work will not be lessened, while our appetite for it is nevertheless stimulated. He presents himself as 'a happy lover' refusing precision, a hierarchical organisation, chronology and any extraneous justification or systematic framework. So what is one to make of it? Marmin's basic assumptions are almost all implicit: one must observe what is deliberately absent - in this sense it is typically MacMahoniste. He throws out, though, indications of his controlling view of Walsh and the American cinema in a seemingly random manner, so that one is a little taken aback when the work does finally hold together. He presents a view of civilisation immediately derived from Barres: that after its creative height (the European High Middle Ages, America in the present century) there follows a period of aestheticism, and then a final stage of decadence characterised by archivism and an extreme lack of creativity. This might seem odd in view of Marmin's use of Corneille and Nietzsche (for instance), but one gathers that such figures have a kind of gratuitous nobility and have to define themselves in confronting the mediocrity of their times. Marmin observes the creativity of America, then, from the standpoint of one looking outwards from the decadence around him to the freshness of a healthy civilisation.

There is of course, no way to prove him wrong in all this, but one cannot help responding to his genuine perception of the splendour of the Walsh oeuvre and the frankness of his refusal to offer explication or justification. The book is bound to be derided, however, for its lack of systematic presentation, its refusal to offer support for the views expressed, and its cheerful acceptance of American domination. In the January issue of *Cinéma 71* Guy Hennebelle is found worrying about the threat to European national cultures posed by American domination, and it should be obvious that they **are** worth worrying about. Marmin is a fatalist, as anyone must be who conceives of his times as mediocre: he would find such scruples to be evidence of a weak refusal to accept life as it is. His view of superior acts, as gratuitous demonstrations of human worth, offers no scope for any act conceived of not as gratuitous, but as an expression of concern for the selection of what is worthwhile in native traditions - and Marmin himself acts, in this book, in a way related to this, or he would not have bothered to write the book at all, nor to have shaped it with quotations from European writers (though he sees not so much traditions as individuals). It seems certain that he has an educative intention, to which, however, his posturing is irrelevant.

At every point, he knows how provocative he is being. His stress on domination, conquest and possession as Walsh themes is calculated to enrage. One would be better disposed towards this aspect of the book if only it were correct as criticism of the films, but it is surely and significantly mistaken. Possession is precisely what Walsh heroes do not aspire to, unless it is possession of self-consistency or self-knowledge, of dignity and self-esteem. In short, Walsh devotes himself to the values of the individual, in himself; the important victories in his work are not imperialistic, but those of men finding a way to live **within** the prevailing emphasis on possession and conquest which is simply present in those around him. Clearly, Walsh's work would not have the character it has if America were not the most powerful nation on earth, but this merely shows us the inevitable similarity of his own situation to that of his favoured characters. His attitude is that of a man preserving his integrity and his nerve no matter what collapses of integrity and nerve he sees around him. Walsh is impossible to characterise in detailed political terms from the evidence of his work: in every case he preserves his humorous detachment and maintains his impersonal clarity and fairness.

Marmin's observations are sometimes very sound, in spite of his occasional puerility and his foolish emphasis on *MURDER INC.* That film lacks any evidence of genuine involvement on Walsh's part - I don't ask for personal motifs, of course, but for his habitual clarity and simplicity. How can this supremely logical artist not have been offended by the grinding mechanism of the flashbacks and by the remnants of Windust's incompetence? Perhaps Marmin hangs on to this film as the only **obvious** evidence of precisely **social** responsibility in Walsh: if so, it suggests a poor understanding of the moral discriminations characteristic of the director.

Walsh is more than Marmin knows, or wants him to be. Marmin's reticence about his relative evaluations of the films might indicate an aristocratic confidence or an extreme inability, and how are we to tell? Faced by a body of films of notable concreteness and lucidity one shouldn't offer diffuse generalisations and think one has done enough. That said, Marmin does communicate an honest sense of Walsh's distinctiveness and of his commanding position in the American cinema over half a century of its development.

John M. SMITH

CLAUDE CHABROL by Robin Wood and Michael Walker

Movie Paperback Studio Vista London 1970

The publication of Studio Vista's Movie Paperback on Chabrol provokes several questions, both about its author and subject (as well as allowing the reader to sigh with relief at the series' recovery from a recent lapse in its general standard of seriousness and intelligence). Robin Wood and Michael Walker are jointly responsible for the book, and I imply no slight to Michael Walker in centring my review of the book on Robin Wood's contribution; many of their assumptions and qualities are shared and Mr. Walker's accounts of Chabrol's most recent films seem to me to be distinguished models of personal and impressionistic criticism; coherent, informative and illuminating, in which the deployment of references to contexts outside of the specific film under discussion invests his vocabulary of analysis and evaluation with specific and suggestive meanings.

The core of their account of Chabrol is an uneasy and shifting confrontation of Chabrol's "cynicism", or as Robin Wood puts it, "the problem of affirmation". Mr. Wood is commendably explicit in his enunciation of criteria, there is none of the unsatisfactoriness of the Hawks book where words like "organic" and "wholeness" had to bear an enormous weight, unsupported by definitive contextual references or systematic exposition. But the conjunction the book enacts between "affirmation" as a sine qua non of excellence, and intelligent exposition and celebration of Chabrol's work dooms the development of their analysis to inconsistency and misconception.

Michael Walker voices explicitly their shared assumption of an individualistic and anthropo-centric position; of cynicism he says:

> "as a developed habit of mind and sensibility it could only be stunting."

Thus the logic of their shared position leads the writers to describe Chabrol's development as one towards a recognition and affirmation of value in human relationships eschewing the bleaker view of earlier films. Robin Wood's account of *LE SCANDALE* follows this pattern, he describes it as a "drive towards purgation" with a moral centre in Paul, who "achieves at least partial clarity and triumph over his confusion and his alcoholic degeneration", with the film's amazing last shot, "wilful and perverse." The last shot surely crystallizes the experiential process of the film in the same way as that justly recogonised as of seminal importance by Michael Walker, in *LA FEMME INFIDELE.*

The perversity is entirely Robin Wood's and not Chabrol's; though Wood's statement is mitigated by the characteristic honesty with which he voices his response to local effects, he shares the general sense of the magnificence of the last shot and can only, rather lamely discount its force in the interests of constructing a consistent, positivist, development for Chabrol.

The problem of reconciling a just apprehension of the force which the central events and images exert in Chabrol's films with a positivism that is almost Lockean in its rigidity leads Mr. Wood into distorting *LE SCANDALE* and perhaps most unfortunately, into a dewy-eyed mysticism in his, at times positively illuminating and certainly very valuable, account of *LES BONNES FEMMES.* The weight of the evidence, consummatly marshalled and elucidated by the author, is surely against his final view:

> *"LES BONNES FEMMES* can be regarded as Chabrol's tribute to the unknown warrior in the persons of the girls, falling in the battle of life, forgotten but for his tender celebration of them."

Surely F.R. Leavis disposed of the critical habit which confused fictional identities with real life activities once and for all in his celebrated put-downs of A.C. Bradley. It's unlike Mr. Wood to forget the lessons of the master.

The central dificiency of the book lies, I think, in the nature of its generalisations, in the way that ideas of the nature of mature art formed anterior to the experience of the movies are permitted to inform generalised statements about Chabrol and the developments of his work that should more properly spring from the perceptive comprehension of the works in detail - a comprehension that the book rarely lacks and in which lies its real value.

There is, too, an absence of discussion of the "chute bourgeoise de l'oeuvre" detected by *Cahiers du Cinéma*, of the way in which fulfilment is to be sought exclusively in personal relationships and to be attainable only in those terms. From *LES BONNES FEMMES*, where the world Chabrol shows the girls to inhabit is rightly described as "radically perverted", we have moved to an arcadian Tremolat where economic activity, and thus modern life, hardly exists. Robin Wood and Michael Walker choose to talk of Chabrol assessing alternatives and they describe *LE BOUCHER* as, "one of the three or four supreme achievements of the French cinema since the beginning of the nouvelle vague". But surely any alternative rooted in Tremolat can be discounted from the beginning, it simply

has nothing to do with life as we know it. A self-supporting peasant community complete with class structure if ever viable, cannot now be regarded as a real alternative; to root one's sympathies and values in the Tremolat of *LE BOUCHER* is to choose a sentimental conservatism as a locus, and celebrate a retreat from the rigour of *LES BONNES FEMMES* to a pastoral ideal, (admittedly unachieved in *LE BOUCHER*), more usually associated with a lay poetess than the "elegiac poet" Robin Wood makes of Chabrol.

Richard COLLINS

SAM FULLER by Phil Hardy

Movie Paperback Studio Vista London 1970

Fuller is a gift to 'auteur' criticism, especially as it is conceived in England at the present time; his ideas and his personality reverberate with such force throughout his work that there is a temptation to find them more interesting than the movies themselves. But Fuller's subject, whether in *THE STEEL HELMET, RUN OF THE ARROW, FORTY GUNS* or *THE NAKED KISS* is, as Jacques Lourcelles has so precisely termed it, 'du sang et des catastrophes'. And a contrived rationale which purports to render a director like Fuller intellectually justifiable enough, on account of his ideas, for complex discussion will not suffice, because the American cinema is not simply a branch of 'American Studies'.

Now Phil Hardy's new book on the director is best when discussing the intricacies of Fuller's visual style; an example comes early on in the book when he is analysing the use of close-up in *I SHOT JESSE JAMES* and *FORTY GUNS*. Without appearing purely reductionist, he breaks a scene down into components and approaches excellent critical analysis of Fuller's emotive logic. But the stretches that attempt to justify the screen-time usurped by didactic conversation which only exemplifies Fuller's naive ideas on politics and education are not worth the intellectual convolutions employed. Fuller's movies are conceived in terms of situations, visual metaphors which defy logical reduction. Hence, we come closer to grasping the essence of Fuller's art when we are shown on the screen Sergeant Zack cradled in the arms of a Buddha, (*THE STEEL HELMET*), or a negro demonstrating against racial integration, (*SHOCK CORRIDOR*), than we do through any amount of discussion of the director's theories concerning Communism.

The emotive power behind such provocative use of imagery is, as Hardy defines it, the 'motor-force' of muck-raking journalism. However, Fuller's achievement must be qualified in respect of this; *VERBOTEN* is evidently inferior to *THE CRIMSON KIMONO, THE NAKED KISS* evidently inferior to *UNDERWORLD U.S.A.* and so on. The power of emotive rhetoric cannot compensate for the inability to conceptualise an idea in terms of the mise-en-scene. Fuller's mind clearly works only in terms of character and situation; "I'm not interested in who's a Red or an Anti-Commie. If I feel the hero should be a Fascist, I'll make him a Fascist. If he should be a Leftist, I'll make him one. I'm just interested in character." *FORTY GUNS* is of course the seminal movie here; for it shows how far Fuller can go in the pure fusion of metaphor and idea, with a disdainful contempt for the contingencies of narrative. In this respect, it defines Fuller's outrageous, 'apocalyptic' art.

Fuller's ideas, whatever significance they have, can only be meaningful if they are embodied in a cinematic metaphor on the screen. *UNDERWORLD U.S.A.* may well be his finest movie because of its near-perfect artistic articulation of the underlying idea, yet losing none of the efficacy of the 'motor-force'. Similarly, in *SHOCK CORRIDOR* and *THE NAKED KISS*, where the value of the images on the screen only serves to underline the naivety of the ideas that gave rise to them, we find ambition constricting invention. It is of no real consequence; that Fuller seems unable to translate his highest ambitions into coherent cinematic articulation, only confirms his limitations and highlights how fine *RUN OF THE ARROW* and *MERRILL'S MARAUDERS* are, how important their implications, stylistic and thematic.

Fuller came to England too soon and too quickly; too soon for us to have formulated any critical language with which to attempt concrete analysis, too quickly for us to have achieved any perspective on the relation of the individual to the totality. Fuller is primarily an emotive phenomenon; at this time, we might well ask, with Tavernier and Coursodon - "comment analyser l'emotion?"

Peter LLOYD

▼ Sam Fuller's project: SHARK! (1969)

The American Cinema

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it comes from a respect for the extraordinary potential of the medium and from a concern for the cinema as an art-form - art understood not sociologically as a quality product accessible only to an educationally or otherwise privileged minority, but as an individually and socially significant and signifying human activity. Finally, it comes from a sense of gratitude towards all those film-makers and directors who have given us a glimpse or a concrete idea of that potential, to us both promise and challenge.

*

The present issue of MONOGRAM is intended to give a reasoned argument and an outlook to this general perspective. It contains three major articles on the American cinema which are meant to clarify some of the implicit assumptions which guided our work on the Brighton Film Review. The article "Why Hollywood" was initially given as a lecture at the National Film Theatre, the second half of which will be printed in our next issue. The reviews feature films which have been shown either in the cinemas or on tv during the past two months, and the article on Eisenstein's style make some pertinent suggestions about the possibilities of a narrative cinema based on fundamentally different aesthetic criteria from those present in the American cinema. The review of RIO LOBO is by one of the editors of Cinema, Mike Wallington, whose phenomenological approach is in some respects different from ours. We look forward to the time when Cinema will return as a publication to be counted on, so that such questions of methodology might be argued at greater length. Finally, the book reviews on Sam Fuller and Walsh raise issues about criteria of evaluation within the American cinema itself, which have so far not been given the kind of consideration they demand.

Besides reviews of current releases and individual films of the past, auteur-analyses, and features of a general nature, MONOGRAM will regularly include some detailed consideration of the expanding literature on the cinema, not only in the form of book-reviews but also articles on other film-magazines. In particular, we shall keep our readers informed about developments in film-criticism abroad, notably France, Italy and Germany, and draw attention to important issues of individual magazines. Our next number will be devoted to the European cinema, with articles on Bunuel, Skolimowski, Rohmer, Rivette, Bergman, Bertolucci and others, while our third issue is planned to deal with the British cinema.

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